UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

THE CONCEPT OF LOVE IN THE WORKS OF HERMANN STEHR

A DISSERTATION

IN GERMANICS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

KARL SIEGFRIED WEIMAR

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Hermann Stehr
and to
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CONTENTS

I. Introduction 1

II. The Concept of Love in the Works of Hermann Stehr 11

1. Family 13

2. Friendship 28

3. Woman 31

a) sensual 31

b) intellectual or spiritual love 37

c) eros 42

4. Mankind 58

5. Material World 72

6. Nation 78

7. Art 85

8. Nature 93

9. God 104

III. Summary 115

Bibliography 116

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The relation of man to the world about him, below him and above him has from the beginning been a challenging problem to the searching mind of man. The revelation of prophets, the thought of philosophers, and the vision of poets have offered countless views, and in every *Weltanschauung,* whether it be a religious doctrine, a metaphysical system, or a poetic vision, the concept of love has invariably found an essential place. In the following analysis of Stehr's concept of love the term *love* will be taken in its broad, philosophical meaning, encompassing all realms of man's emotional experience with the world about him. A brief survey of some of the representative peaks of religion, philosophy, and poetry will serve to illustrate the many forms and the different shades of meaning which the concept assumes.

The love relation of man to God and of man to man is one of the basic principles of the world religions. If man is to regain tranquillity and complete contentment, said Laotse, he must seek after Tao. Tao is the supreme principle and model, the Ultimate Reality,[1] and love, appearing here as a gentle compassion,[2] is designated as a necessary help in the quest. The teachings of Gautama Buddha point to a similar goal, the Nirvana, which is variously interpreted as a negative concept of deliverance from existence, i.e., suffering, or as a brief period of bliss to be obtained in this life.[3] The Noble Eightfold Path is offered as the means thereto and love plays a major part in it: "all the means that can be used as helps towards doing right avail not the sixteenth part of the emancipation of heart through Love."[4] This theme of love recurs frequently. The followers of Buddha are exhorted to "cultivate goodwill towards all the world, a boundless (friendly) mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity."[5] Here the

[1] Walshe, W. Gilbert. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.* Vol. IX, pp. 87 f.
[2] *The Tao Teh King,* translated by James Legge in Vol. XXXIX of *The Sacred Books of The East,* Oxford, 1891, speaks of "gentleness" (Chap. 63) and "recompensing injury with kindness" (Chap. 67).
[3] *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol. IX, pp. 376 ff.
[4] *The Itivuttaka,* translated by T. W. Rhys Davids in *Early Buddhism,* London, 1908, p. 62.
[5] *The Mettasutta,* translated by V. Faustböll. *The Sacred Books of The East,* ed. by F. Max Müller, Oxford, 1887. Vol. X, Part II, p. 25.

concept is more essential than with Laotse and much broader, for it is, in the final analysis, an all-embracing charity.[6]

However, in the words and the person of Christ the concept of love found its most beautiful and significant expression. Love is no longer a means or a help to man in his quest; it is the motivating force of his activity. When Christ was asked by a certain lawyer of the Pharisees what the great commandment in the law was, he answered: "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."[7] Above all, man is exhorted to love; and the love of God and the love of one's fellow man are inseparably molded into one pattern. But there is still a greater love than these: God's love. "Beloved," wrote the Apostle John,[8] "let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth, is born of God; for God is love (*Agape*)." . . . "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, . . ."

By its very nature, as a significant, mysterious, many-sided force, love has ever held the attention of the philosopher. He has endeavored to investigate it rationally and systematically, and fit it into the pattern of man-world-God. Plato considered love (*Eros*) in the last analysis to be a need or desire arising from the sensation of insufficiency, in contrast to perfection. His concept of love, corresponding to his epistemological system, was dualistic, and he sharply distinguished divine (*Uranios*) love from common or earthly (*Pandemos*) love.[9] This Platonic *Eros* is by nature anthropocentric, and in its highest form is the desire of man to approach the Divine. It is the upward movement of man to God.

The Christian concept (*Agape*), on the other hand, is a purely theocentric love. It is the outflowing of God's love and hence by nature a descending movement. There are two other relations of love included in the *Agape*-concept; man's love to God and man's love for his neighbor. Man's love to God is the first and great commandment, but it arises

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[6] "And he lets his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of Love, and so the second, and so the third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole wide world, above, below, around, and everywhere, does he continue to pervade with heart of Love, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond measure. . . . Verily this, Vasettha, is the way to a state of union with Brahma." Translated from the *Tevigga-Suttanta* by T. W. Rhys Davids in *op. cit.*, Vol. XI, pp. 201 f.

[7] *Matthew* XXII, 37 ff.

[8] *First Epistle* IV, 7 ff.

[9] *Symposium,* Chap. 8 and 10.

out of duty and gratitude, where all human choice is excluded. This is in contrast to the Platonic *Eros* which emanates from man's need and desire to find satisfaction in the divine fullness and blessedness. *Agape*-love for one's neighbor is uncaused; it is love for the neighbor himself without any reservation and is rooted in the Christian's love to God. *Eros*-love, on the other hand, is principally for the sake of the Good, or of God in the neighbor.

The Platonic *Eros* exerted considerable influence on the development of the Christian concept of love, so much so that it can be said, "there arose an age-long conflict in Christian theology between the ideas of *Agape* and *Eros,* the history of which is the history of Christian thought; and in the process there has arisen very much confusion between the two ideas, a confusion in which we are still entangled."[10] Nygren has shown that the teaching of love in Augustine represents a transformation of the original idea of *Agape* under the influence of *Eros* and that the scholastic formulation of the Christian concept, as for example, in the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, is permeated with the idea of *Eros.* Elements of both *Agape* and *Eros* are contained in the Medieval *Caritas.* In contrast to the Platonic *Eros* the Mystics of the Middle Ages concerned themselves with an altogether selfless love,[11] which became more and more an intellectual activity, until finally the development of this particular concept of love culminated in Spinoza's corollary: "the love of God for man and the intellectual love of (the mind of) man toward God is one and the same."[12]

Kant had little to say about the concept of love, but it is interesting to note that he took the "moralische Liebe" of the *Aufklärung,* called it "praktische Liebe" and relegated it to the Will.[13] Nietzsche revaluated the concept of *Mitleid* advanced by Schopenhauer to *Mitfreude,* and at the same time exhorted his followers to the *Fernsten-Liebe;* both of which correspond to the Dionysian-Apollinian duality of his own personality. Freud, on the other hand, attached so much importance to the physical side of love that he excluded almost all other considerations. Jung and Adler, however, finally managed to restore some balance with

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[10] Nygren, Anders, *Agape and Eros.* Part I. Translated by A. G. Hebert, London, 1932, p. X (translator's summary of the argument).

[11] As for example in the *Tractat von der Minne* from the School of Meister Eckhart: ". . . wan mynne ist ein neigung dez willen, die entspringet von bekenntnüsse der vernuft." Preger, Wilhelm. *Geschichte der deutschen Mystik im Mittelalter.* Leipzig, 1881. Vol. II, p. 420.

[12] *Ethics* V. Propos. 36.

[13] *Metaphysik der Sitten.* Zweiter Teil; *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre* (1797), Chap. 7, 25, 46 f.

their concept of love (i.e., higher love) as a sublimation of the libido. Still more recently Klages turns to a very different phase of the concept when he speaks "of the cosmogonic Eros."

Love, as conceived in this treatise, is perhaps the most fundamental theme of creative writing of all times. Even a sketchy and random review of German literature will offer examples of many types of love; for instance, of sensual love; of idealistic or pure love; redemptive love; love sublimated into religion; the affection of friends; light or frivolous love; love of country, and love of nature.

Gottfried von Strassburg, for example, exalts the power of sensual love and glorifies its devises and deceits in the search for earthly happiness. Wolfram's Parzival, on the other hand, overcomes the temptations of base love (Orgeluse im Wunderschloss) and is sustained through his period of doubt and suffering by his longing for the Grail and his idealistic love for Conduiramur. Der arme Heinrich, in the poem of Hartmann von Aue, is healed physically and spiritually by the love of the simple maiden who, longing for the heavenly crown, offers her life in sacrifice. It is interesting to note that Gerhart Hauptmann in his treatment of the same story shifts the motivation to Ottegebe's human love for Heinrich. The theme of woman's redemptive love appears again in Goethe's *Faust* and Wagner's two early operas, *Der Fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*. Faust's salvation is not won by his own striving alone, even in its highest and purest endeavor, but also by the intercession of Gretchen and by Divine Grace. Gretchen's love surmounts even her physical death and her loving spirit is prepared to welcome the redeemed Faust. She has shed all that was of this earth, only her infinite love for Faust remains.[14] It is she who is to lead Faust into the new world as her spirit speaks:

> Vergönne mir, ihn zu belehren, . . .[15]

For those who are united by love on earth belong together in all eternity. And thus Mater gloriosa bids Gretchen's spirit

> Komm! hebe dich zu höhern Sphären,
> Wenn er dich ahnet, folgt er nach.[16]

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[14] *Goethes Werke*, Vol. 5, ed. by Robert Petsch, Leipzig, 1926, p. 479.
[15] *Faust* II, 1.12092.
[16] *Ibid.*, 1.12094 f.

It is the eternally feminine which leads man upward. Senta's faithful love saves the Flying Dutchman from the curse of eternal wandering, and Elisabeth's pure love redeems Tannhäuser from the curse of sensuality. Characteristic of these women is their complete readiness for self-sacrifice, culminating with Wagner in the self-consuming love-death of Isolde.

As a romanticist, Novalis experienced love as the fundamental force in his life; his love became his religion. Shortly after the death of his beloved Sophie Novalis' human love for her was being transformed into absolute love, into a magical mysticism, a matter of the will and of faith, a longing of the soul, and thus into religion. "Ich habe zu Söphchen Religion—," he wrote, "nicht Liebe. Absolute Liebe, vom Herzen unabhängige, auf Glauben gegründete, ist Religion. Liebe kann durch absoluten Willen in Religion übergehen."[17] Novalis' hero, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, expresses the same convictions in his love for Mathilde. He sees his beloved as the one who leads him to God; he feels that through her God and the wonderful love of God is being revealed to him: "Was ist die Religion, als ein unendliches Einverständnis, eine ewige Vereinigung liebender Herzen."[18]

A different kind of love is the affection between friends. This theme appears less frequently and is often set against the background of war or battle. It is commonly characterized by a comradeship which is strengthened in the face of danger or death. One need but think of the warriors of the Nibelungenlied, Hagen and Volker. The devotion to a common cause gives rise to a friendship of ideals, where the enthusiasm of two men for the same ideas entwines their fates, as for example Don Carlos and Marquis Posa. Still another aspect of friendship not to be overlooked, is the joy of good companionship, the comforting feeling of mutual admiration and dependency. Fine examples of this can be found in the poetry of Klopstock. In *Der Zürchersee* he expresses a variety of delights in an interesting progression. He sings first of his joy in nature, then of his delight in wine; then of the satisfaction of immortal fame, culminating this scale, however, in the apotheosis of friendship as expressed in the lines:

> Aber süsser ist noch, schöner und reizender
> In dem Arme des Freunds wissen ein Freund zu seyn,

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[17] *Aus Tagebuchaufzeichnungen. Deutsche Literatur.* hrsg. v. Heinz Kindermann. *Reihe Romantik.* Vol. 4, p. 277.
[18] *Novalis Schriften,* hrsg. v. J. Minor. Jena, 1907. Vol. IV, p. 176.

And if only all his friends were with him he would truly be in Elysium. Klopstock's high esteem and love for his friends was carried to a cult of friendship by some of his followers (the Göttinger Hain); it was still present with the young Schiller, and later reached a new and still higher plane with the Romanticists and in the George-circle.

Before passing on to love the object of which is other than persons, mention should be made of the light and frivolous love characteristic of the so-called Anacreontics (Gleim, Uz, Hagedorn) and of the Goethe of the Leipzig period. It is often shallow, trivial, and affected, but not without charm and elegance. A love of wine (which was, for some, vicarious) was also a favorite theme.

Love of country has aroused poets of all times to stirring songs of praise and of pride in their country, songs which in turn moved men to a new consciousness of their nation's virtues. An example, remarkable for its time, is Walther von der Vogelweide's "Ir sult sprechen willekomen." Not again until Klopstock did love of country burn so brightly in German literature. Klopstock inspired his fellow-countrymen with a new and nobler *Nationalgefühl.* He exhorted his compatriots to be proud of their native land; he exalted their past;[19] he dared to place the German muse, at the time of Gottsched, Gleim, and Elias Schlegel, in competition with Shakespeare and Milton;[20] and he praised the German language with enthusiasm and conviction.[21] Klopstock's love for his native land was dignified and humble:

> 'Einfältiger Sitte bist du, und weise,
> Bist ernsteres tieferes Geistes. Kraft ist dein Wort,
> Entscheidung dein Schwert. . . .
> Ich schweige . . . und sinne dem edlen schreckenden Gedanken nach,
> Deiner werth zu seyn, mein Vaterland.[22]

Mention must also be made of the poets of liberation, whose fervent desire for their country's freedom and independence found expression in their political verses.

Nature is an inexhaustible source of a great variety of poetic inspirations, as it gives to the poet what he seeks in it and reflects what he is. Walther von der Vogelweide, for instance, loved nature for the beauty he saw in it, and the immediate joy it brought to his heart. Quite

[19] Cf. the Ode *Hermann und Thusnelda,* and the tragedies *Hermannsschlacht, Hermann und die Fürsten,* and *Hermanns Tod.*
[20] *Die beiden Musen.*
[21] *Unsere Sprache.*
[22] *Mein Vaterland.*

different is the attitude of Albrecht von Haller, whose poem *Die Alpen,* reflecting the spirit of eighteenth century rationalism, is basically descriptive and didactic. Klopstock and Goethe, at times, both approached nature in the role of sport enthusiasts; they were fond of walking, riding, and skating. Klopstock's marked religious bent, however, also drew him to nature, for he saw in it the manifestation and revelation of God. Goethe was moved by the play of tremendous natural forces and by his discovery of a dynamic God in nature. Lenau, on the other hand, representing a typically romantic attitude, is extremely subjective and personal. He is filled with *Weltschmerz,* and likes to see in nature the mirror to his own suffering self. The objective or realistic position is represented by Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, who loves the scent and colors of the heathland, the movements of insects and the softest sounds. Mörike reveals still another affection for nature; he likes to personify nature and create his own mythology out of it. On the other hand, Eichendorff, a Silesian like Stehr, approaches nature from his Catholic background, seeing in it the manifestation of a friendly, personal God.

In summary, a good picture of the concept of love in its many different forms and meanings can be obtained from Richard Dehmel's *Die Verwandlungen der Venus* (1907). Herein he treats Venus Anadyomene, Primitiva, Pandemos, Socia, Excelsior, Creatrix, Urania, Religio, Madonna, Mater, Mamma, Natura, Bestia; Amor Modernus, Domesticus; Venus Adultera, Maculata, Perversa, Mystica, Idealis, Metaphysica, Occulta, Vita, Mors, Homo, Sapiens, Fantasia, Regina, Consolatrix, Universa, Heroica, and Venus Mea.

Even this brief survey clearly indicates the intrinsic complexity of the concept. The many different ideas suggested here attempt to illustrate its comprehensive nature. A definition of love, it seems then, would have to include all of these aspects. And such is the case. The *Deutsches Wörterbuch* lists under *Liebe* the following:[23]

1. die innige zuneigung eines wesens zu einem andern.
2. insbesondere die innige neigung zu einer person des andern geschlechts.
3. mit betonung der geschlechtlichen lust.
4. neigung zu eigenschaften, gütern, besitz, beruf, u. ähl.
5. die l., erscheint personificiert, das gefühl wird mehr oder wenig deutlich als ein wesen dargestellt.

and three more which, however, are of no importance for this study.

[23] Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm. 6. Bd. L-M. bearbeitet von Dr. Moriz Heyne. Leipzig, 1885.

And under *love* the *Oxford Dictionary* gives the following:[24]

1. That disposition or state of feeling with regard to a person which (arising from recognition of attractive qualities, from instincts of natural relationship, or from sympathy) manifests itself in solicitude for the welfare of the object, and usually also in delight in his presence and desire for his approval; warm affection, attachment.
2. In religious use, applied in an eminent sense to the paternal benevolence and affection of God towards His children, to the affectionate devotion due to God from His creatures, and to the affection of one created being to another so far as it is prompted by the sense of their common relationship to God (cf. charity).
3. Strong predilection, liking or fondness for, or devotion to (something).
4. That feeling of attachment which is based upon difference of sex; the affection which subsists between lover and sweetheart and is the normal basis of marriage.
5. (With Capital) The personification of sexual affection. Eros, Amor, etc.
6. The animal instinct between the sexes, and its gratification.

Five more uses of the word are listed and four more different meanings, none of which need be mentioned here.

To sum up: these two definitions include the love between parents and children and between brothers and sisters; the affection of one friend for another; the love of God and the love between men called charity; the love of man for woman, both physical and spiritual, and in varying degrees of admixture; the love of worldly possessions; the devotion to the home-land; the love of nature; and the love of art; to name only the principal experiences. It becomes clear now that the concept of love, as defined, includes all of these relationships, and it is this larger concept which, as indicated in the beginning, is to be applied in this study.

This treatment of love, rather than the usual and more limited treatment of, for example, Kluckhohn,[25] or Emilie Kubitz,[26] or Hazel Clare,[27] is not arbitrary. It is suggested by the nature of Stehr's work as a whole. Stehr takes for his material, man's life as he saw it about him. He considers the individual's growth and development and his contacts with all that surrounds him; family, friends, woman, mankind, worldly interests, state, art, and nature. But he is not satisfied with the mere

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[24] *A New English Dictionary* on historical principles, ed. by James A. H. Murray. Vol. VI, L to N by Henry Bradley. Oxford, 1903.

[25] *Die Auffassung der Liebe in der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts und in der deutschen Romantik.* Halle, 1931.

[26] *Die Auffassung der Liebe im poetischen Realismus.* Diss. Univ. of Illinois, 1932.

[27] *Eros in the Works of Hauptmann.* Diss. Northwestern University, 1941 (manuscript).

description of this panorama; for Stehr is not a naturalist, nor is he altogether a realist. His purpose is essentially didactic, or moralistic:

> Wenn ich die Welt nicht umgestalten wollte,
> so sagt mir nur, warum ich singen sollte.[28]

In his early twenties Stehr came to look upon his poverty, misfortune, and loneliness as an act of providence, designed to forge and temper his soul and his work. He felt himself called upon, as he says, "mich als ein neuer Johannes zu erweisen und den Menschen eine neue Offenbarung zu bringen. . . ."[29] "Das Rätsel des Lebens, das Geheimnis des Menschenwesens galt es zu entziffern. Den Schleier von dem verhüllten Bild musste ich wegziehen."[30] Despite all hardship and opposition he held fast to this conviction: "Man zerstörte mich nicht, geschweige konnte man mir den Glauben an meine Mission zerstören, die vom ersten Augenblick an darin lag, die Geheimnisse des menschlichen Wesens bis in die letzten Tiefen zu erhellen."[31]

Stehr himself plumbed the last depths and there experienced "the new revelation." Like Georg Kaiser, Franz Werfel, and others, he proclaimed "the new man." Stehr's "new man" may be a great poet, a scholar, a student, or a farmer; a child, or a fisherman: "Er sei, was immer, was liegt daran, wenn er nur darauf aus ist, seine Seele wirkend und handelnd in seinem Leben zur Entfaltung zu bringen, wenn er nur nicht aufhört, die Musik dieses ewigen Wesens seiner letzten Tiefe durch die Gestalt seiner Eigenart tönen zu lassen."[32] Only this kind of man earns the title, "person," which word Stehr derives from personare —to sound through—and which he then interprets as one who lets God sound through him. This man knows that his "true self" is not the empirical ego; it is the Nirvana of Buddhism, the Tao of Laotse, and the Gottesgrund of Meister Ekkehard; it is what Christ meant when he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." It is the soul. Stehr's "new man" realizes further that that which we call the soul within us, and that which we call God without, is one and the same. He sees that his life has meaning and sense only in so far as it approaches the

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[28] *Zeilen I. Lebensbuch,* p. 162.
[29] *Blätter aus meinem Leben. Das Stundenglas,* p. 216.
[30] *Ibid.,* p. 220.
[31] *Ibid.,* p. 236.
[32] *Faustgedanken über das wahre Ich des Menschen. Das Stundenglas,* p. 157.

Divine,[33] and so he strives to discover his true self in order to effect a reunion of soul and God. In this scheme of things the personality is no longer the goal, as it was with Goethe, but it remains an important means thereto. Personality dissolves into anonymity; all self-centered consciousness ceases, empirical limitations are sloughed off, and the individual finds the way back to his true self, beyond space and time, in infinity and eternity.

The way to this goal is not that of self-castigation, nor of fatalistic quietism. It is the way of living in pure and active love.[34] Such living is the manifestation of God,[35] and the highest and happiest way of life for man.[36]

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[33] "Der Zweck unseres Lebens besteht in der Erweiterung des Gebietes unseres bewussten Geistes, d.h. die immer weitere Vergöttlichung unseres Lebens." *Aufzeichnungen aus den Tagebüchern, ibid.*, p. 270.

[34] "des reinen umsichtigen Wirkens." *Faustgedanken, op. cit.*, p. 159.

[35] "Die unbegrenzte Liebe der Menschen zueinander ist die einzige Offenbarung des Gottes in uns und des Weltgottes, die ein und dasselbe sind." *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 372.

[36] "Das Leben in Liebe ist die höchste und freieste Form des Daseins." *Aufzeichnungen, op. cit.*, p. 276.

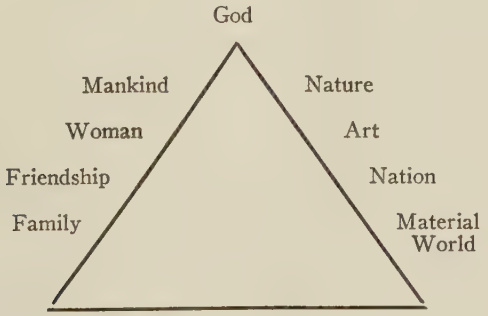
CHAPTER II

The Concept of Love in the Works of Hermann Stehr

There are numerous difficulties which arise when the attempt is made to treat the concept of love in its larger sense, as indicated in the introduction; therefore, it will be necessary first of all to adopt a clear and consistent method of procedure. The many relationships which touch upon man's life and to which in turn he forms, consciously or unconsciously, some sort of definite attitude seem to fall into two categories: the personal relationships, that is, family, friendship, woman, and mankind; and the thing-relationships. By the latter is meant those relationships which do not directly involve individuals or persons as the object; for example, the material world (and here the reference is to material possessions, such as money or land), the state or nation, art, and nature. These relationships will be considered in the order just mentioned, for this corresponds to the natural sequence in which man experiences them in the course of his development.

It will be shown that Stehr's position to these relationships gives evidence of a trend towards a more impersonal, selfless love in each category, from a negative stand to a positive, progressing to depersonalization and anonymity. For this reason the consideration of the relationship to God has been left to the final chapter.

The pattern which suggests itself in this treatment is the figure of the triangle. The one side represents the scale of the personal relationships and the other, the thing-relationships. Both point upwards and have their point of fusion in the relation to God:



For the most part, this study will have to be limited to Stehr's work, for there is not yet sufficient biographical data available to permit a satisfactory consideration of the relation between Stehr's own life and his work as it concerns our topic. However, the loss is more that of interest than of value.[1]

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[1] "Das Persönliche des Dichters (ist) bloss Vorteil oder Hemmnis und nie wesentlich für seine Kunst. Seine persönliche Biographie kann die eines Philisters, eines braven Mannes, eines Neurotikers, eines Narren oder eines Verbrechers sein, interessant und notwendig, aber hinsichtlich des Dichters unwesentlich." Jung, Carl Gustav. *Psychologie und Dichtung.* In: Philosophie der Literaturwissenschaft., hrsg. v. Emil Ermatinger, Berlin, 1930, p. 330.

1. Family

Stehr's major works, *Drei Nächte, Der Heiligenhof, Peter Brindeisener, Nathanael Maechler, Die Nachkommen,* and the incompleted *Damian Maechler,* belong to the category of *Erziehungs-* or *Bildungsromane.* These novels treat the individual in the course of his development and show some significant change in his character. They picture him, for example, acting against the background of family, encountering friends, falling in love, struggling for a post or position, finding joy in nature and pride in his country, learning the beauty of art, and feeling the presence of God. Turning now to Stehr's novels, one can readily recall how his protagonists pass through most of these stages. Each experience contributes its share to the moulding of character, but there is one which Stehr's men must face first and which leaves its mark upon them in the very earliest stage, and that is the family.

First, Stehr acknowledges the force of heredity. Franz Faber, for instance, is acutely conscious of family ties; he sees the influence of his grandmother reaching out beyond the grave into the lives of his parents; he determines to stand by his family against the attacks of the Church and some hostile citizens; and then he finally realizes that he must break the bonds and set out as his own master. "Menschen binden uns," he says, "und Menschen lösen uns, und deren Hände uns aus dem Grabe heraus noch fesseln, denen muss man das Knie auf die kalte Brust setzen und den Griff ihrer Finger aufbrechen. . . . In Wirklichkeit aber irrte ich als Toter um die Hügel meiner Toten und rang mit ihnen, dass sie mich entliessen in meine Sehnsucht, die immer ferner und ferner her lockte. Denn wie der Baum dem Samen, den er entlässt, seine Art aufzwingt; wie die Welle in die andere vergeht, um sich zu wiederholen; so erben auch die Menschenkinder die Fesseln derer, die sie zeugten, und Tausende und Abertausende wachsen und welken nutzlos hin, wie das Gras der Gräber."[2]

It is interesting to note in this connection that Stehr treats the question of heredity not from a naturalistic, but from a metaphysical view-

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[2] *Drei Nächte,* pp. 343 f.

point.[3] His other characters come to the same conclusion as Faber. Andreas Sintlinger, for example, struggles against the family inclination to mad and riotous living, until finally he is able to enter upon his own way of life. Peter Brindeisener fights as best he can against the depravity and sensuality that surround him, but he is unable to escape. Nathanael Maechler relives the stormy past of his ancestors until he succeeds in freeing himself; his son, Jochen, tries in turn to shake off the shadow of his father.

Turning from the background to the problem of the family proper, we find the pattern most strikingly indicated in the novel, *Der Heiligenhof*. Here the action is balanced between two hostile families, living on opposite hills. The one farm is dilapidated, silent, almost forsaken; the other is flourishing, bright with song and dance, a drawing point for the folk from the nearby towns. In the fate of these two farms Stehr develops a picture of the family, upon which the impact of love, or the lack thereof, is clearly defined. A negation of love leads to destruction and tragedy, whereas the manifestation of love leads to happiness for the family, and to an inner serenity and strength for the individual. The different fates of both families may in large measure be deduced from the nature and manner of the fathers.

The soul of old Brindeisener, master of the decadent farm, is distorted by hate inherited from an ancient feud. The tie that binds him to his family seems to be motivated only by his obsession to perpetuate this hatred. He has no understanding, no love for his little son, Peter. The old man vents his hatred of Sintlinger on Peter whom he chastises on one occasion so brutally that the experience leaves a lasting, disastrous effect on the boy. Stehr symbolizes this in a revealing dream.[4] A brief consideration of it will help in the understanding of Stehr's attitude to such a family relationship. Following the unhappy end of his first meeting with the "Heiligenlenlein," the boy flees in terror to the barn where he sinks into a deep sleep. He dreams he is falling through black night. When morning comes he hears a voice calling him. It is his only salvation from the terrible fall. It is Lenlein's voice, the voice of love. Then from eternity, a face comes swiftly upon him; it is the "Weltallssatan," commanding, inescapable. Upon awakening, Peter recognizes in the face of his own father the features of this Satan. Such a relationship seems to

[3] The problem of heredity is treated by Freitag in his dissertation on Stehr (Groningen-Batavia, 1936, pp. 153-58). It seems fitting to acknowledge here the author's indebtedness to this exhaustive study of Stehr; its thorough analyses have served as an indispensable basis on numerous occasions.

[4] *Peter Brindeisener,* pp. 109 f.

allow but one alternative, revolt against the father. Between father and son stands the broken mother. She understands her son, for she too has never known love from her husband. Her simple heart cannot encompass this unnatural conflict which hastens her death. "Denn die feindliche Auflehnung eines Kindes gegen seinen Vater ist ja auch eine widernatürliche Umkehrung der ganzen Welt."[5] Like many of his contemporaries Stehr raises the age-old father-son problem and draws the inevitable tragedy which arises from this conflict. The organic unit of this family is destroyed by the negative attitude of the father and by the consequent revolt of the son. The mother dies; Peter never knows happiness, and Brindeisener and the older son sink ever lower as the family perishes.

Vastly different is the situation in the Sintlinger family across the hill. The love of gentle Johanna first draws Andreas Sintlinger from the whirl of his youthful folly, and then the arrival of a daughter effects a permanent change upon him. Here Stehr presents his loftiest concept of love between father and child. What originally was a visitation of fate, becomes a divine salvation for Sintlinger. His love for his "blind" daughter becomes a kind of worship. Lenlein is his saint, through whom he finds the way to his true self and God. "Ich habe kein Kind," he cries, "ich habe einen Engel."[6] This is the joyful cry of a father who recognizes in his child the manifestation of the divine and who strives to be worthy of it. The abundant success of the farm is a result of the deep spiritual happiness of the "Heiligenbauer." The profound love of this father for his child becomes a feeling of almost complete dependence: "Was soll denn werden . . . wenn uns, wenn mir- mir- mir- das Lenlein genommen wird? Dann geht es mir wie einem Wasser, dessen Quelle vertrocknet; wie einem Winde, der seine Erde verliert; wie einem Hause, dem zur Nachtzeit das einzige Licht erlöscht; ich versiege, verliere den Weg und verfinstere."[7] This is Stehr's transfiguration of a family built on the grace of love.

We can characterize the family relationship throughout Stehr's work as either following the pattern of the Brindeiseners or that of the Sintlingers. In general, the atmosphere of hostility, distrust, and lack of understanding seems to predominate. Again and again the picture of the unhappy, tragic family is to be found. For example, Franz Tone, the Schindelmacher, suffers a terrible tragedy which the greed and

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[6] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 36.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 359.

contempt of his niece and her husband helped bring upon him. Leonore Griebel's married life is stifled by the failure of her husband to show an understanding love. Frau Wiesner, in *Das Abendrot,* and all her children die from want of love. Karl Exner, in *Der begrabene Gott,* tortures his wife with distrust and suspicion. The cruel discipline and heartless domination of Peschke, in *Die Grossmutter,* break the spirit and cause the death of his son. Marianne, in *Meister Cajetan,* flees from her father's dictates to the protection of the kind violin-maker. Professor Konegen, in the drama *Meta Konegen,* and Professor Weitfeld, in *Die Krähen,* fail to realize the duty of a loving husband and thereby cause the dissolution of their families.[8]

Passing now to a more detailed consideration of the family, it will be advisable to distinguish three relationships; first of all, the relation of the child to its parents, then that of the parents to the child, and finally the fraternal relationship. But before approaching any of these it is necessary to establish Stehr's concept of the child, for this is the determining factor in each relationship. Stehr believes that man springs from God, as the wave from the ocean, and returns to his source at the end of his brief stay on this earth:

> Die Muschel, die dem Meeresgrund entzogen,
> bewahrt das Brausen doch als leisen Ton,
> und lauschest du, singt dir das Wellenwogen
> traumhaft ins Ohr, das längst sie schon gefloh'n.
>
> So durch Geborensein dem Meer entstiegen
> der unerforschlich tiefen Göttlichkeit,
> klingt in den Menschen immerfort verschwiegen
> als leiser Ton der Sinn der Ewigkeit.[9]

But often the grown man, buffeted by misfortune or bloated by prosperity, fails to hear this "leisen Ton" any more. The child, however, is still too close to its divine source. It is not yet changed or dulled by the world; it is still filled with divine music. This point has already been

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[8] The discussion of the relationship between husband and wife as a problem unto itself, will find its place in the chapter on woman, but let it suffice to say here that, although the fate of Stehr's women, particularly in the case of Meta Konegen, is strongly reminiscent of Ibsen's Nora, Stehr's interest lies more in the unveiling of the deficiency and tragedy inherent in human character than in the championing of women's rights.

[9] *Die Muschel. Lebensbuch,* pp. 266 f. Cf. also *Faustgedanken, Der Monolog des Greises, Ein Herbstgang,* and *Mittelgarten.*

touched upon when mention was made of Sintlinger's devotion for his daughter. He realized that Lenlein was not just a child, but an angel, too; he thought, "dass vielleicht eben in Helene Gott seine Musik spiele."[10] He did not consider his child blind as did the others, for he felt her eyes were looking inward, to the soul, to God. Faber expressed the same concept of the child when he addressed his colleagues: "Wir sollen die Kinder nicht von sich, sondern zu sich,—von uns erlösen."[11] Like Helene Sintlinger, Amadeus Mandel and Damian Maechler live in the "clouds of glory,"[12] and take their place among the most beautiful child-creations in German literature.

Turning now to the relationship of the child to its parents, we find a marked difference in the attitude towards the father and towards the mother. For the most part, Stehr shows the child shy and ill at ease before the father, but happy and unrestrained before the more gentle and understanding mother. The extreme case of Peter Brindeisener has already been discussed, but it might be added here that unlike some of his contemporaries, as for instance Werfel in *Nicht der Mörder, der Ermordete ist schuldig,* Stehr does not condone the revolt of the son, for he is too acutely aware of the tragic consequences which befall a whole family as the result of such action. In the short story, *Die Grossmutter,* Stehr expresses the thought that death is better for a child than continued existence in dreadful fear of the father. Little Emil Peschke is shown confined to bed with no sickness save the condition brought about by the severity and cruelty of his father. The child is terrified by the very appearance of the father, and when the latter becomes impatient and angry, he falls into a paroxysm of fear. He stutters some Latin sentences which his father had undoubtedly drilled into him and breaks off in desperation: "Liebes, gutes Vaterle, lass mich. Ich will sterben. Ich will sterben."[13] The old grandmother, who by her mysterious power had brought back from the threshold of death so many members of her family, decides to will the death of little Emil, for she recognizes death as the only salvation from such a relationship.

The contrast in the attitude towards father and mother is most clearly illustrated in *Meta Konegen.* When the two children first appear before their father they answer his question shyly and laconically. Little Urselchen is fearful lest her father scold if she should tell him about

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[10] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 458.
[11] *Drei Nächte,* p. 22.
[12] Wordsworth. *Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood.* V.
[13] *Das Abendrot,* p. 117.

their bad dog; Willy, on the verge of tears, forgets the poem he is asked to recite and shows his anxiety lest the father berate his mother. When Meta enters, however, both children run happily to their mother and chatter away contentedly. Quite similar is the case of Jörg and Sissi Weitfeld in *Die Krähen.* The children are unhappy and tense in the presence of their father and yet despite this they have a deep affection for him.[14]

Stehr's own relationship to his father and mother is portrayed in large measure in *Drei Nächte.* He gave his mother's maiden name, Faber, to the family and made his hero's father a saddle-maker like his own. Like Stehr, young Faber is devoted to his father; he admires, though at a distance so to speak, his father's proud will and courage. For his sake Franz entered a profession which he himself did not love. And then there is the episode which so poignantly shows how the child yearns for and needs some show of love from his father. It was the morning after Franz had routed the malefactor who had dared to disgrace the family name. His father was approaching his bed: "Ich musste meine Augen schliessen vor seiner furchtbaren Nähe. 'Franz, du?' fragte er noch einmal und legte seine Hand auf meine Achsel. Mir schlug das Herz und ich glaubte, es sei nun alles vorbei, darum wagte ich zu bekennen, was ich in all den Jahren ersehnt hatte. 'Weil ich dir so gut bin, Vater!' hauchte ich und lag regungslos und ergeben. Aber statt schneidendes Gelächter zu hören, fühlte ich einen langen Kuss auf meiner Stirn und seine tiefergriffene Stimme sagte: 'Mein lieber Sohn.' "[15] It was like a song to the boy, and he never forgot that his father had kissed him.

Stehr's affection for his mother is also reflected in Faber's attachment to his mother. When young Faber realizes that his unorthodox views and independent thoughts are misunderstood by his mother and are actually estranging her from him, he yields to her wishes and prays with her in the words of her faith. Her distress moved him so deeply that he acted even against his own convictions. That Faber was compelled later to break away from this bondage is no sign of a lack of love on his part, but is as previously indicated, a necessary step for the individual seeking his own salvation in the depth of his true self. A further tribute to his own mother is to be found in a statement Stehr made to Oskar Wilda: "Meine Kunst stammt direkt von meiner Mutter, einer stillen

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[14] *Ibid.,* p. 245.
[15] *Drei Nächte,* p. 153.

Frau, deren Seele so rein und gross und reich blühte, dass sie ohne Intellektualismus im Besitz der ganzen Wunder dieser Erde war."[16]

Finally there is the story of Amadeus Mandel, Stehr's most beautiful tale of a child. Amadeus lost his mother when scarcely a day old, but all the love and affection a child can have for both parents he felt for his father. With most unusual understanding and skill Stehr develops the relationship between child and parent. The little tailor spins wonderful tales of his adventures in cities and towns all over the land, while Amadeus grows happier and happier in his dream-world. His favorite game was "Hildesheim," when he built the town and its people, and played that his father was an apprentice on the way, through forests and all sorts of dangers, to Hildesheim. Until one day the neighbor's boy came over and, in a squabble, destroyed all Hildesheim and trampled his father to bits. The child's dream-world is irrevocably shattered, and he finds himself alone, a stranger in the empirical world. Amadeus looks upon his father now and cannot recognize him; instead of the wonderful adventurer he sees only a frail little man, with drooping shoulders, twisted and humped. He becomes frightened and cannot comprehend what has happened.

This period of adjustment into the empirical world is the most critical period in the child's life. It is the time when he needs most the affection and attention of his parents, for love is the only means of leading the child safely and happily into his new world. Amadeusla's father does his best to comfort and guide him. For a while he succeeds, but eventually he becomes entangled in an affair with his housekeeper and this draws father and son apart. The child misses his attentions and caresses; he becomes despondent and falls sick. Longing for love he turns to his mother in heaven, and when he has a vision of a pathway leading up from the pond to her, he sets out to follow it. But his father overtakes him; realizing the child's loneliness and his own mistake, he dismisses the housekeeper and together they return to the Mandelhaus.

In contrast, there is the attempted "education" of Helene Sintlinger by Fräulein Elfriede Knille. Her approach is impersonal, unsympathetic and disciplinary; the result is a dismal failure. Within a few minutes of her arrival at the Heiligenhof, Lenlein "sees" her: "Das Fräulein ist gerade wie ein Baum. Ganz hoch. Aber ohne Äste. Bloss oben ein wenig. Und wenn sie redet, geht ein Türchen auf wie bei unserer Uhr, und der Kuckuck ruft."[17]

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[16] *Hermann Stehr.* Nord und Süd. Okt., 1903, p. 110.
[17] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 204.

An important factor in the family relationship is the element of reciprocity, for as much as the child needs the love of the parent, just so much does the parent need the child, and as much as the parent gives the child, so much does he receive. In the previous discussion of the relationship between Sintlinger and Lenlein it was shown how dependent the father was on his daughter and how he found through her the way to the higher life he sought. Eusebius Mandel also knows what happiness and blessings children bring to their family. As *Geschichten aus dem Mandelhause* opens, the unhappy little tailor is wondering why the other folk of the village bear their lot more happily and easily than he: "Und da er eine wieselflinke Seele besass, blieb ihm auch nicht verborgen, warum das so war. Sie hatten Kinder. Das ist für Menschen nicht anders, als wüchsen zwischen den staubgrauen Steinen ihres Weges süsse Schwingel des Grases, und als bräche aus schwerem Herbstgewölk unvermutet und unbegreiflich der Frühling herein, und her steife Wind des Alters hat keinen rechten Fug an solche Männer. . . ."[18] There are many parents in Stehr's works who manifest a deep and sympathetic love for their children, but there are few characters who realize or have even the faintest notion of what the child really brings to them: "Die wenigsten Erwachsenen haben eine Ahnung von der beseligenden Zucht, die die Kinder auf sie ausüben, und dass die Welt längst in der Enge nützlicher Klugheit, vorsorgender Furcht und ängstlicher Vertrauenslosigkeit erstickt wäre, wenn nicht die Seelen der Uumündigen immer wieder auf der Erde das Reich göttlicher Weiten sähen und die Menschen durch alle Wände der Welt in himmlische Luft führten."[19] Besides Sintlinger and Mandel there are only Frau Garbe of *Das letzte Kind,* Lenore Negwer of *Das entlaufene Herz,* Gudnatz in his transformation, and Faber, who possess this wisdom.

Stehr himself was one of these "few adults," too. His insight came to him from his relation to his own children. In the fourth poem which he dedicated to Willy Stehr, who died on the field of battle, he says:

> "du wardst mein Lehrer, da ich dich erzog."

and:

> Ich bin um meine Heimat fast gekommen,
> Da in der Fremde sich dein Auge schloss.[20]

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[18] P. 8.
[19] *Der Heiligenhof,* pp. 168 ff.
[20] *Totenlieder IV. Lebensbuch,* pp. 218 f. "Heimat" here, meaning man's real home, i.e., God.

Let us turn now to a more detailed consideration of the relationship of the parent to the child, treating first the attitude of the father. The case of the Brindeiseners is the extreme example on the negative side. Here is the case of a father who seems to show absolutely no sign of love towards his son. His interest in this son is motivated solely by the intent to use him as an instrument of revenge; thus he finances Peter's education, and for this reason he favors Peter's marriage with Helene Sintlinger. Such an attitude, of course, helps prevent him from discovering his true self (always the goal for Stehr's characters), incites the revolt of the son and contributes to the eventual ruin of the family. On the other hand, the case of the forester Grossmann, in *Nathanael Maechler,* represents an aberration of love. His pathological affection for his missing son reduces him to a pathetic figure, and eventually causes him to lose his mind. Stehr presents only one instance of abnormal love in the family, and even that, the incest between the merchant Milke and his widowed daughter, is only rumored, the episode receiving but brief mention in *Drei Nächte.* In the same novel we find an example of that father-son relationship which is perhaps most typical in German literature; the father concealing his affection behind a cold and stern exterior. When the father yields to his love, even though only on one occasion, the impression made upon the son is deep and lasting, as has been indicated above.

The tenderness and affection which Eusebius Mandel shows for his son, and the understanding and devotion which Andeas Sintlinger possesses for his daughter are expressions of Stehr's own feelings for his children. His delight and joy in playing with his little boy is charmingly and affectionately expressed in *Mein Männchen hat noch Röckchen an.* The child's exuberance, the wonderful little things he makes from his imagination, and the sparkle in his eyes: all lead the fond father back into his own childhood, and here again "childhood" is that state of closeness to the Divine:

> Und wenn ich mit dem Knirpse spiel,
> Herr Gott, bin ich da weise!
> An seinem Händchen stehl ich mich
> in meine Kindheit leise.[21]

To one who sees so much in the child, the loss of one brings doubled sorrow. *Gedanken an mein totes Kind*[22] is a touching song to a child

[21] *Der Mittelgarten.* Pohldorf. 15.10.1897, p. 59.
[22] *Ibid.,* pp. 57 f.

who died even before it was named. Stehr's love for his children has inspired him to some of his finest poems; these are more lyrical and possess more warmth than the philosophical poems, which comprise the main body of his works in verse. The most wonderful of these is *In den Ferien.* It captures the freshness and light-heartedness of children at play; it reflects the happiness that comes to the old (Stehr was fifty-four!) as the magic of their childhood returns. To be with children is the holiday, a holiday from age and care.

Nun toben wieder in meinem Haus
die wilden Jungen ein und aus,
baun Ställe aus Brettern,
jagen und klettern,
keilen sich, singen,
lachen und springen,
drehn alles von unten nach oben,
und will man sie fassen, sind sie zerstoben,
quirlen die Strasse hinaus ins Feld.
Und über ihnen am Himmelszelt
wandelt der Berge riesiger Traum
in blauem Flug durch den blauen Raum.

Wir Alten schütteln den Kopf beglückt
und sind uns gar weit zurückgerückt.
Was längst in uns vergessen schon,
klingt wieder in gegenwärtigem Ton.
Die Bäume sind viel tiefer grün,
viel satter im Garten die Rosen blühn.
Die Laube noch einmal so traut
aus Ranken auf das Weglein schaut,
und noch einmal so still und weit
ist unsers Alters höh're Zeit.[23]

Not only in song but in deed too, did Stehr show his devotion to his family. For their sake he remained in the detested bondage of the elementary school-teacher; but he always felt richly rewarded, for his joy and his life lay in his children.[24]

The love of a mother for her child is a constantly recurring theme. Only once is there presented a negative attitude and this is marked by grim tragedy. In the *Legende vom steinernen Mann,* the wild Bohemian

[23] *Lebensbuch,* pp. 272 f.
[24] *Mit meinen Jungen, ibid.,* pp. 163 f.

girl Schirmek pays with her life for the murder of her illegitimate children. This inhuman act of a mother is an offense against divine order, and she is punished by the old stone-man, Stehr's symbolic representation, in this case, of divine providence. The gravity of this offense is also marked by its effect on the old stone-man. He was so deeply grieved by this sacrilege of love that his countenance weathered thereafter almost beyond recognition.

With fine psychological understanding Stehr presents the problem of the mother's relationship to children born of a loveless marriage. He comes to the conclusion that a woman who does not receive understanding and love from her husband is not capable of giving a full love to her child. Three works, *Der begrabene Gott, Leonore Griebel,* and *Das Abendrot* (all from Stehr's early period), treat this problem. In each case the woman is unhappily married; in the first two mentioned she hopes to find in her child some compensation for her suffering. Not one of the three women is able to experience any love for her children, and all find the only escape in death. The fate of Marie Exner, in *Der begrabene Gott,* is the most terrible. Her fervent prayers for a beautiful baby are answered by the birth of a horrible monstrosity; she loses her mind, buries her God in wild rage, smothers the child and sets fire to her home. It is easy to see in the monstrosity the symbolic representation of the offspring of a loveless marriage in general. The novel, *Leonore Griebel,* is a careful psychological study of the gradual suffocation of a delicate, dreamy girl who married a dull merchant, lacking understanding and imagination. Leonore bears him a normal child, but her attitude towards it is that of a stranger. Her kisses come from the lips and not the soul; she does not know how to care for the baby, and eventually even loses interest. She becomes bitterly jealous of her husband's affectionate attentions to the child and finally comes to the conclusion that it is not her child, only his. Like Marie's baby this child is born only of the bodies of its parents; the tragedy represents the sacrilege of a purely bestial conception. *Das Abendrot* is another story of a woman who suffered long in a loveless marriage. Frau Wiesner lived through the deaths of eight of her children, always hoping for some change in her husband. Despite their extreme poverty she knew that want had not killed the children, unless it be want of love. She herself was so grief-stricken and embittered by her own barren life that she could not nurture them: "Vo' was wird ein Kind, vo' was lebt's? Vo' Liebe.—Ha und musst ich se da nich vergiften mit meiner Wut, mit

mei'm Kummer—musst ich nie?"[25] When she finally realized that her husband could not change, she took her own life.

A woman must never be put in a position where she has to choose between the love of her husband and the love for her children; for she would never make this emotional adjustment. Frau Brindeisener, who never experienced real love from her husband, dies, though the decision in her case should not have been so difficult to make. Meta Konegen, on the other hand, had enjoyed many years of happy married life, but when her husband eventually became estranged from her and her problem of choosing between husband and children arose, she could not find any solution.[26] She became mentally deranged and plunged to her death.

In the great majority of cases the mother's love for her child is understanding, steadfast, and self-sacrificing. Johanna Sintlinger, for instance, accepts her daughter's blindness bravely; she shares her later joys, and overcomes her grief at Helene's tragic end, seeing in her life and death the will of divine providence. Her love is simple, normal, helpful, and sympathetic, whereas that of the father was dependent and worshipful. With tender care and concern Mother Negwer, in *Das entlaufene Herz,* watches over her daughter. When the girl goes astray she forgives her with understanding and compassion and, forsaking the home of her ancestors, she goes out to find her again. The mother-daughter harmony in *Der Geigenmacher* and the wonderful transformation of the old mother as she speaks of her daughter has been pointed out by Petersen.[27]

In an ascending scale Stehr presents the wonderful love of the mother. Frau Nagel, the *Gotschdorfer Weib,* gives up her own last crumb to her children, and perhaps because she is thus capable of self-sacrificing love, death appears to her and speaks with her. Her love for her daughter lifts Frau Stumpf, in *Meicke der Teufel,* out of the morass of sensuality and, making the supreme sacrifice, she dies to save her daughter. An indication of the sublimation of a mother's love for her child to a religious faith is presented in the case of Ursula Rütsch.[28]

A mother's love can be so strong that it reaches beyond this world. *Das letzte Kind,* born of Stehr's own experience, is the story of such a love that triumphs over life and death. During his Pohldorf years

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[25] P. 20.

[26] This problem will be treated more fully in the chapter on woman.

[27] *Wundergeige und Hochzeitsgeige.* Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 1940, p. 82.

[28] To be sure, it is the marvelous power of the Heiligenlenlein which is the final cause of Ursula's reviving the old Anabaptist faith, but it is the deep pure love for her Weissköpfchen which prepares the way.

(1889-1900) Stehr and his wife lost three children. He saw his wife by the power of her love wrest their last child from the arms of death, only to lose him in the end. He dedicated this story to her, in the hope that it might succor her in her great sorrow, as it had freed him from his deepest grief. Here we find the characteristic Stehr method, an anchoring of the event in the realistic world and then the transfiguration from the empirical to the ideal, to the final world of eternal values,[29] a method also favored by Stehr's great Silesian compatriot, Gerhart Hauptmann. In this case the force that makes that possible is love. So poignant and strong is the love of Frau Garbe for her last child, as he lies before her close to death, that it reaches out beyond the grave to disturb the heavenly peace of one of her departed children. His mission was to return as the angel of death, but he loses his strength before his mother's love. He is stripped of his immortality and the power of his mother's love loosens the bonds of heaven itself. The Lord is so moved that he grants the mother's soul release from this troubled life that she might rejoin her children. Gerhart Hauptmann compares this pure and intense love with that of the Mater Dolorosa.[30]

Another indication of the tendency of human love to transcend human bounds and to become divine is evident in *Das entlaufene Herz.* The sight of a mother and her child reminds Mother Negwer of her own daughter, and it seemed "als trete die Gottesmutter selber mit dem kleinen Heilande aus dem Weltfinstern."[31]

Let us turn now to the final category, the fraternal relationship. Stehr treats this problem but rarely: in *Der Graveur, Der begrabene Gott,* and *Peter Brindeisener.* The Schramm brothers, the Exner brothers, and the Brindeisener brothers are hostile brothers; a kind word or deed on the part of one brother is returned by the other's contempt or even violence. It is not possible to formulate a general explanation for all three cases, and so it will be necessary to consider each briefly. The first two, however, are similar in so far as the hostility is motivated by the one brother's suspicion and distrust, particularly in regard to the settlement of inheritance. Josef Schramm, the engraver, is accused of taking his brother's share of the inheritance; then the drunken, good-for-nothing brother mocks him and taunts him for his righteous living and finally assaults him. Schramm's concern and kindness is repaid by

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[29] Cf. Petsch, R. *Bemerkungen zu der Kunst H.S.* Preussische Jahrbücher, 223. Bd. Heft 3, März 1931, p. 293; and Kindermann, Heinz. *Hermann Stehr.* Ztschrft. f. Deutschkunde. Heft 6, 1935, p. 396.

[30] *Über ein Volksbuch.* Das litterarische Echo, 1. Nov. 1903. Heft 3, p. 168.

[31] *Mythen und Mären,* p. 205.

violence, as he is rendered mute by blows from his brother's hand. The results of this are tragic; Schramm falls to brooding and melancholy, his fine character deteriorates; he becomes insane with hate and finally, after murdering a friendly smith whom he imagined to be his brother, he hangs himself. The relationship between Karl and Joseph Exner, in *Der begrabene Gott,* while not so violent, is nonetheless hostile. Karl, the club-foot, is distrustful of his brother and thinks he is being swindled of his legacy. When, in time of trouble, he gruffly demands that his brother help him, Joseph says sadly: "Aber, Karla, wir sein doch Brüder. Müss mr denn immer Prügel reden."[32] This unhappy question expresses the tragedy which is inherent in the hostile relationship between brothers. Peter Brindeisener's aversion to his brother is born of much deeper motivation. Peter sees in his corrupt brother the base sensuality which plagues his own life; he considers his brother partly responsible for this and hates him for it.

On the other hand, a very positive attitude exists between brother and sister, as in the case of Franz Faber and Anna, and Peter Brindeisener and Amalie. The principal joy of Faber's youth is his beautiful sister, and long after her death he loves to sing of her.[33] She becomes the symbol of all that is beautiful and good in woman. Once during his unhappy seminar years he feels her presence in the form of a blond girl whom he passes on the street and he greets her involuntarily.[34] Wally, the sweetheart of his student days, seems to be like her[35] and years later he again feels her power, this time through Liese.[36] Brother and sister are united here by a mysterious bond which their love creates.

A somewhat similar relationship, though between father and son, is to be found in *Der Geist des Vaters.* This story presents a remarkable instance of a telepathic bond between living persons, a condition which, as will be shown later, exists between friends and also lovers. Dr. Brustat, stopping at Beirut on his return from a scientific expedition, sees in a vision his father suffering a convulsion, when the father was actually having a stroke in faraway Silesia. Stehr offers no explanation, but it seems likely that the bond between father and son surmounted the empirical limitations.[37]

In his unhappy family life Peter Brindeisener experiences real love

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[32] P. 245.
[33] *Drei Nächte,* pp. 76 f.
[34] *Ibid.,* p. 212.
[35] *Ibid.,* p. 333.
[36] *Ibid.,* pp. 78 f.
[37] Cf. *Das Abendrot,* p. 148.

only in his relationship to his sister. Amalie's voice seems to him to be as beautiful as the Heiligenlenlein's.[38] In this identification with Lenlein his affection for his sister is shown to be of the same texture as his love for Lenlein.[39] Stehr's love for his own sister is the inspiration for these two relationships. He gratefully acknowledges the companionship and understanding of his sister in a poem which is dedicated to her.[40]

In summary, it can be said that Stehr emphasizes the importance of the mutual love-relationship in the family; he shows how it furthers the spiritual welfare of the individual members and contributes to the happiness and success of the family. Stehr also realizes that the family is the basic unit upon which the nation is built and depends. In *Das Stundenglas* he states that the family "in ihrer aufbauenden und bewährenden Würde"[41] is a requisite to the welfare of the nation. And finally, beyond this, Stehr expresses the thought that all mankind is one family: "Viele Nächte habe ich durchwacht, bin in Feldern und Wäldern umhergeirrt und habe mich wohl auch auf den Kirchhof in Raspenau geschlichen, um an den Gräbern zu sitzen. Denn wo immer ein Mensch unter einem Hügel ruht, da liegt unser Vater, unsere Mutter, unsere Schwester, oder unser Bruder."[42] This thought is to find its complete development in the later chapter on mankind.

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[38] *Peter Brindeisener,* p. 93.
[39] Cf. chapter on woman.
[40] *An meine Schwester. Lebensbuch,* p. 20.
[41] *An die deutsche Jugend,* p. 113.
[42] *Drei Nächte,* p. 344.

2. Friendship

Friendship in the general sense of mutual regard occurs but rarely in Stehr's work. Instead of real companionship we find a partnership of fate. Stehr's protagonists are too involved in the struggle of their own search for God. They turn to serve others only after they have found their own true selves. To such characters friendship for its own sake is of little import. It is, however, a source of renewed inspiration and strength, "ein Licht auf dem Wege."[1]

This is the nature of the friendship between young Franz Faber and Willmann, the man Faber and Kastner, Brindeisener and Jungmann, and Sintlinger and Faber. They all seem to be drawn together irresistibly by fate. Kastner, for instance, desists in his efforts to approach Faber, trusting the "Unzerreissbarkeit des mystischen Bandes,"[2] which he feels exists between them. And he is soon given proof "dass ehrliche Sympathie auch die andere Seele, nach der es uns hindrängt, ebenso bindet wie uns."[3] Albert Jungmann feels instinctively drawn to old Peter Brindeisener.[4] He senses a close tie to his fate; he sees Brindeisener appear mysteriously before him, and is then strangely led to him. Brindeisener, too, has felt the attraction to the young man[5] and acknowledges the strange bond between them: "Die Telepathie der Lebenden kann nicht geleugnet werden."[6] This telepathic bond or affinity is inescapable. To struggle against it is futile. Sintlinger wrestles with the shadow of Faber, flees before his form, and endeavors stubbornly to escape his influence, but he is led inevitably to him "in einer ahnungsvollen Schicksalsverknüpfung."[7] He finally gives up struggling with these higher forces and accepts the interest and the counsel of a wise and good man. Now his heart is filled with longing for Faber and he knows that Faber must return to him. These bonds of friendship

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[1] *Drei Nächte,* p. 348.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 14.
[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 26 f.
[4] *Peter Brindeisener,* pp. 7 f.
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 44.
[6] *Ibid.,* p. 47.
[7] *Der Heiligenhof,* pp. 151 f.

and guidance, beyond the control of the individual, are somewhat akin to the secret societies of the novels of Goethe and the Romanticists.

The manner in which friendship thus originates and develops seems to conform to natural laws, and this view is substantiated by a notation of Stehr in *Das Stundenglas*:[8] "Die Beziehungen der Menschheit zueinander (Freundschaft, Liebe) sind denselben Gesetzen unterworfen wie das Wachstum der Pflanzen, der Tiere, der Kristalle. Durch keine Klugheit, Überlistung oder Schlauheit vermag man ihr Wachstum zu fördern oder den Verfall aufzuheben."

An essential part of friendship is its confessional value. Stehr's protagonists unburden themselves before their friend and experience a sort of ethical catharsis. With fine psychological insight he has his characters unfold their lives, their soul, as before a confessor: "Ich erzähle doch eigentlich wegen mir, v o r dir, nicht f ü r dich," says Faber.[9] This shows the almost egotistical attitude of friendship. The friend is the sympathetic audience, who, by his understanding listening, helps Stehr's heroes to find clarity about themselves. It seems that only by a confession before a friend can they find the key to their own souls, and then gain for themselves a composite view of their life and an understanding of its meaning. This is clearly brought out by Peter Brindeisener: "Aber was all dies Ringen mir immer verheissen und nie erfüllt hat, das ist mir durch diese Bekenntnisnacht geschenkt worden, in der ich mich weder verhüllt noch geschont habe."[10] It is not a stylistic preference, but an inner necessity which compelled Stehr to cast these two novels in the form of a confession. Moreover, Stehr's conviction of the purifying value of confession can probably be attributed in part to his early Catholic background, a fact which is, in general, too often overlooked.

Friendship is a light on the way to the soul and to God; the best that one man can give to another; it is "ein hohes, denkwürdiges Fest der Seele."[11] Young Franz Faber, for example, is started on his way towards deep inner life by old Willmann, while the man Faber is freed and unburdened by confession to his friend Kastner. This same Faber's friendship rescues Sintlinger from spiritual disintegration and leads him back to the high road of living.

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[8] P. 272.
[9] *Drei Nächte*, p. 126.
[10] *Peter Brindeisener*, p. 308.
[11] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 551.

Friendship which is based on mutual regard and on sharing each other's joys and sorrows is not experienced by Stehr's men, with the notable exception of Bruder Theophil, in the story of *Meister Cajetan.* His is a quiet gentle friendship of service and understanding. The significance of its presentation by a representative of the church will be treated later in the chapter on God. Theophil's love for Meister Cajetan is that of a father who sees his son on a doubtful road; it is full of concern and counsel. Inspired by this devoted friend Cajetan lends a deeper and purer tone to his last two violins. The inspirational value of friendship is also a theme of the poem, *Bei der Trennung von einem Freunde*:

> Und noch begreif ich nicht, was heimlich innen
> für Saat sich wird aus diesem Scheiden drängen.[12]

Women seem to be more able to enter into conventional friendship than men. They are more intuitive and thus not so much concerned with spiritual conflicts. Their friendship is born out of the universal community of their fate. They can more easily share with others their grief and happiness. From out of the dark tragedy of *Der begrabene Gott,* the friendship between Kathe Exner and her sister-in-law Marie shines as a single light. Kathe faithfully stands by Marie through her terrible trial; she comforts her with tender compassion, nurses her, and prays for her. For a time her love and devotion stave off the tragedy. The friendship between Christel and Agnete in *Die Nachkommen* is akin to sisterly affection. The common experience of approaching motherhood brings them ever closer; they share each other's distress, thus lessening the burden and they partake in each other's happiness as both bear boys.

In summary, one can say that the ordinary concept of friendship does not find much space in Stehr's work. For him friendship is a matter of affinity, an attraction by fate; it is almost egotistical as it satisfies a strong confessional need; it acts as a beacon on the road towards self-clarification and perfection.

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[12] *Lebensbuch,* p. 125.

3. Woman

The relationship between man and woman, perhaps of all human relationships, exerts the most direct influence in molding man's life. As love has exalted man and destroyed him, so it has freed him and bound him, according to its nature. It has always been a subject of interest and study for those who seek to unravel the mystery and the meaning of life.

In Stehr's work this relationship seems to fall into three general types: sensual love, where the physical element predominates, intellectual or spiritual love, where the rational or the religious element predominates, and Eros, a synthesis of the first two types, either attained or attempted.

(a) sensual

The most elemental form of the relationship between man and woman is pure passion. It destroys the marks of distinction between man and beast, and brings to the fore the animal characteristics. In Stehr's second published work, *Meicke der Teufel,* it is worth noting that the name given to the wanton woman is Frau Stumpf, for she is as dull and stupid as an animal. Melanie Negwer, of *Das entlaufene Herz,* is violently jolted out of the bliss of first love into mortal fear by the transformation which she sees passion effect upon man. At first she is so transported by happiness that she no longer knows whether she is looking into the eyes of the man beside her or into the eyes of the stars, and she cannot distinguish the music of the night air from the man's voice. But suddenly the spell is broken for ever: "Da sah sie über sich ein blasses, verzerrtes Männergesicht, dessen Lippen stammelten und das die Augen eines irren Tieres hatte."[1] She fled from the bestial look in man's eye and sought a love that would not cause this terrible transformation. The animal element of sensual love is even more clearly epitomized by the symbolism of *Der Geigenmacher.*

[1] *Das entlaufene Herz, Mythen und Mären,* p. 203.

The deep, pure tone of the violin is inspired by the Geigenmacher's love for Schönlein; its antithesis is the discordant cry of the peasant boy pursuing her. The voice of sensual love, represented by this youth, resembles "mehr dem Brunstlaut eines grossen Tieres als dem Ruf eines Mannes."[2] The voice reminds one of that of "ein kochender Stier," and "ein wieherndes Pferd."[2] It strikes terror in the heart of Schönlein, this child of nature and God, who fears neither forest nor night. Symbolical, too, is the fact that Stehr presents Maruschka, in *Geschichten aus dem Mandelhause,* as a mute, for she represents a kind of elemental sensuality. She cannot hear the divinely inspired song of little Amadeusla, nor can she express herself in any but crude inarticulate sounds. Her love scene with Eusebius Mandel calls forth only a "Tierweinen."[3] Paula Grossmann in *Nathanael Maechler,* is purely a destructive force. She wanders about in the mountains luring Prussian soldiers to their death as she seeks revenge on the man who abandoned her to return to his native Prussia.

The principal *leitmotiv* of Stehr's work is man's striving to achieve harmony with himself, with his soul, and with God. The way to this goal is actively and effectively to bring about the unfolding and the flourishing of the soul, in this life. Whatever interferes with this goal, or aids in its realization, is a thing of greatest weight. Sensual love is a negative force for it releases destructive elements within man which prevent the flourishing of the true self, of the soul, and thus cause the disintegration of his character and his ruin.

In two instances even physical deterioration and debilitation follow. The two beautiful daughters of the bank director Klöhn, in *Der letzte Akt,* return from a mysterious trip (apparently necessitated by their seduction at the hands of the vengeful engineer) a mere shadow of their former youth and charm. While this, however, is only an episode in the story, in the case of *Meister Cajetan* it is the principal theme. After his encounter with passion, Cajetan becomes "der Ausgesogene," "ein vom Tode Erstandener, verkrochenen Auges und verfallenen Gesichtes."[4] A victim of his senses he is finally drawn to inexorable ruin by the power of his passion.

Yet even more terrible than the outward physical deterioration is the inner disintegration. Stehr's concept of the artist is lofty and exacting.

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[2] *Der Geigenmacher,* p. 196.
[3] *Geschichten aus dem Mandelhause,* p. 113.
[4] *Meister Cajetan,* pp. 132 f.

He considers him the seeker of the meaning of life. He strives to find expression for the music of heaven and earth and his own soul. Exalted love is his inspiration, profane love his destruction. Cajetan's wonderful genius for creating master-violins is inspired by his tenderly reverent love for Marianne, but it is desecrated and finally consumed by his lapse into the sensual. In this story Stehr's symbolism of the effects of the two kinds of love is most apparent. The wonderful violins which seem to sing with a heavenly voice are the product of Cajetan's humbly loving devotion for Marianne. But the divine spell is broken when earthly love enters their relation and from that moment on he can produce only caricature-violins, instruments which as he fashioned them, take on the suggestive shape of the feminine figure. He can no longer experience his former visions, which now have become diabolically grotesque caricatures. The artist in him is irretrievably lost, his world shattered, his life destroyed.

Stehr's last published work, *Der Himmelschlüssel,* presents the thought that profane love incarcerates the soul within the body and obscures the view beyond and through the phenomenal world into the world of a higher reality and into eternity. In this little tale Frau Schiedeck is found unworthy of receiving the key to heaven; for when her husband offers her a wonderful gift, she comes to him eagerly, seeking only selfish pleasure in love.[5] The key to heaven is not for such people; from that time on, Stehr tells us, the eye of a mortal sees only one half of the world.

Meicke der Teufel presents a stark tragedy of passion. To Wenzel love was nothing but sheer lust; in spite of his efforts to combat it he cannot resist it. Physical desire and jealousy drive him to murder and finally suicide. Frau Stumpf, in the same story, stagnates in the swamp of her senses. Only through the love of her daughter are her eyes opened momentarily. She compares her daughter's pure love, "süss wie junger Maisonnenschein— . . . wo kinderhelle Sonnenglut um Knospen hüpfte, die sein Licht tranken und davon aufblühten," with her own desires; "ein Sumpf, der endlos in die Breiten wuchs, müdes, stinkendes Wasser, in dem Felder lagen, in voller Frucht ertrunken; Städte, im Bau zu Ruinen geworden. . . ."[6] Her life is stained and ruined. Even though she redeems her soul by sacrificing her life for her daughter, her real self, her soul, cannot be redeemed in this life.

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[5] *Der Himmelschlüssel,* pp. 85 ff.
[6] *Meicke der Teufel. Auf Leben und Tod,* pp. 148 f.

A very similar case is that of the girl, Schirmek, in *Die Legende vom steinernen Mann.* She enjoys happiness and even divine protection until her love degenerates to license, driving her to the murder of her children. With her own death she tries to expiate her deeds.

Stehr presents sensual love as a force destructive to man's inner life. Once fallen a victim, it seems almost impossible to overcome it or escape its curse. Again and again Stehr's men are swept to ruin, often despite their bravest but futile efforts to resist. More determined than Wenzel and Frau Stumpf is Inspector Vogt, of the short story bearing his name. However, he seeks self control on rational principles which do not spring from an inner urge and consequently he fails, too. To please his mother he resolves to terminate his wild life, marry a respectable girl and settle down. He marries without love and the former city blade tries now to become a farmer. However, since the resolve to become a good man was rationally imposed and did not come from his heart the inspector soon abandons his new life to return to his old ways. His mother dies of grief; he himself later returns, a derelict, to hang himself; his wife's life is broken and she follows him in suicide.

Grim and desperate is Peter Brindeisener's struggle against the consuming power and curse of sensual love. It is a "surging, broad, deep stream between himself and the blessed island of pure love, an obstacle which cannot be circumvented."[7] This passion is such a virulent and malignant force that not even the Heiligenlenlein can bring him permanent salvation; only the combination of her pure love, the sympathy of his friend Jungmann, confession and atonement on his part, and finally voluntary death effect the purification. Stehr brands here profane love as a hostile force, which in its causal inevitability, brings about man's defeat in his search for the divine light in his soul. Peter, at ten, is already initiated into its rites by witnessing a marital scene of his parents. He is so profoundly shaken by this experience that he does not understand how everything could remain as before.[8] He is goaded by his older brother's attitude to hired girls,[9] and is shaken most directly by the tantalizing Mathinka Meixner.[10] In his uncle's house his own aunt makes advances to him.[11] The inexorable force

[7] *Peter Brindeisener,* p. 194.
[8] *Ibid.,* pp. 67 f.
[9] *Ibid.,* pp. 69 f.
[10] *Ibid.,* pp. 88 f.
[11] *Ibid.,* pp. 162 f.

within him, symbolized by the appearance of the dark shadow, drives him back into Mathinka's arms.[12] But no true union of two lives can be founded on such a basis: "Ich wusste, dass ich mein Leben um ihretwillen zertrat und ihr doch nicht gehörte. Sie fühlte ihre Verlorenheit und meine Lebensferne, und dennoch schmolzen wir immer wieder flammend in einander. Mit jedem Opfer, durch das unsere unerschöpfliche Leidenschaftlichkeit um Liebe warb, wurden wir glückloser und wilder. Wie zwei, die sich zerstörten, um zu leben, waren wir, bis keine Ader mehr bebte, tobte es in uns."[13] This force continues to consume him and he plunges into dissolute student life, hoping to find salvation. But the vision of the Heiligenlenlein transforms him and he strives to be worthy of her. But even in her presence he succumbs to his former emotions, which threaten to sweep both away. He flees from Lenlein, hoping to save her from his fate, but he only drives her to suicide. Peter himself, reduced from the bright future of a lawyer to the miserable existence of a bookkeeper, wanders on through life broken, lost, defeated, a symbol of man's vain struggle to free himself of the snares set by his own nature.

So pernicious is the force of sensual love that even one single degradation causes almost irreparable damage to man's soul. This is the dominant note in the novel, *Nathanael Maechler*. Upon one occasion young Maechler succumbs to the mountain woman, Paula Grossmann. Although he flees from her the next morning, something of that night remained with him long, long afterwards, disturbing him, haunting him. Repeatedly he feels the presence of that woman; her dark eyes appear before him and sear his very soul.[14] The same dark eyes haunt and terrify Maechler's wife, Lotte;[15] sadness and fear steal over their child, Jochen.[16] In a thousand ways Maechler's inner peace and harmony, as well as the happiness of his family, are disrupted by his sense of guilt. Even the many good deeds for his fellow men cannot bring him the redemption that he seeks, for he is not free and pure within. The meaning of Paula's words, "Etwas von mir ist in dir. Das wird dich zerreissen . . ."[17] is now clear. The pernicious germ lies in man and once allowed to live, it will consume him. Lotte's love-

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[12] *Ibid.*, pp. 182 f.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 192.
[14] *Nathanael Maechler*, p. 183; p. 260; pp. 317 f.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 259.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 241 and 244.
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

death,[18] however, brings him release from the shadow and he finds at last, peace and redemption in the return to the Catholic Church.[19]

The theme of the ballad-like poem, *Das hohe Haus,*[20] is once again the fatality of passion. This is a story of one single transgression and the ensuing curse upon the house and the generation that followed. Stehr gives neither definite locale nor names; the act and its consequences take on universal significance.

Stehr's world is based upon his conviction of the ubiquity of God and of man's striving to find and to realize that which outside of him he calls God, and within him, his soul. As an artist, he seeks to present this by means of characters and description, but when these prove wanting he turns to symbols. In this way he shows sensual love as the antithesis to the Divine, which condemns it.[21] The action of the child, Amadeus Mandel in leading his father away from the eager Maruschka is of symbolic significance, for as was shown, she represents elemental passion, and the child the incorruptible divine purity of childhood. When little Amadeus senses the nature of the relationship between his father and the mute, his beautiful, divinely inspired song becomes shrill and meaningless.[22] That mere love of the flesh is abhorrent to the Divine is the essential meaning of the scene between the child and the mute: "Als Amadeus ihre Hände an seinem Leibe fühlte, gebärdete er sich wie toll, rang wie in Todesangst mit Händen und Füssen gegen sie und schrie; geh weg, geh weg!"[23]

The stone-man of *Die Legende vom steinernen Mann* represents the Divine; no one knows his origin but he is said to be on the broad road leading to the north, which symbolically is called eternity. He inspires and aids true lovers, but pursues, torments, and condemns the others. He smiles upon the first love of the wild girl, Schirmek. Her repeated misdeeds, however, force retaliation upon him, but his disappointment leaves deep lines in his face. In this significant little tale Stehr symbolizes divine interest in human love and divine retribution for its desecration. But God, too, suffers deeply in his disappointment, as evidenced by the change in his countenance.

No discussion of the concept of love between man and woman would be complete without a consideration of the nature of man and woman.

[18] Cf. chapter on Eros.
[19] Cf. chapter on God.
[20] *Der Mittelgarten,* p. 90.
[21] Cf. the discussion of nature symbolism.
[22] *Geschichten aus dem Mandelhause,* p. 102.
[23] *Ibid.,* p. 130.

This problem will of necessity be part of a following chapter, but a word must be said here of Stehr's concept of woman. He speaks of "irdische" and "himmlische" women;[24] women who pay for their lives with love, and those who pay for love with their lives. Of the first group Paula Grossmann, Maruschka, the Schirmek girl, and Marianne, stand out. And yet Stehr does not consider these earthy women altogether condemned, for despite their sensuality they need not lose their true womanhood. Sensual love cannot fulfill the soul's longing for a reunion with God; it need not, however, stain the vast depth of the soul. Marianne, for example, the little Pompadour of the story of Meister Cajetan, is one of those women, "die keusch bleiben, und wenn sie sich auch alle Tage verschenken, weil keine Leidenschaft das Ruhen ihres Wesens je ablotet und ihre Sehnsucht nach engelhaft-reinem Verströmen je erfüllt."[25] These women are not evil; they are unhappy.[26]

In the terse lines of his poetry Stehr frequently states the essence of his thought; thus we find his concept of love and woman succinctly expressed in the poem *Detlev von Liliencron*:

> Es ist nie wahr, dass Jettchen, Fine, Stine
> nur leben, unsre Männerbrunst zu kühlen.
> Sie tragen so wie wir des Gottes Miene,
> und nach dem Höchsten tastet all ihr Fühlen.
> Wer edel ist, der macht sie nicht zur Phryne
> und scheut sich, in die Gasse sie zu spülen.
> Lust ist nicht Liebe, wenn auch Liebe Lust.
> Wer andere täuscht, enttäuscht die eigne Brust.[27]

(b) INTELLECTUAL OR SPIRITUAL LOVE

It is not only sensual love which "deceives" and "disappoints," but also intellectual (or platonic) love. For Stehr very clearly delineates the tragic failure of a purely intellectual love in its inadequacy in forming an enduring bond between man and woman. In two cases he portrays the disruption of marriages caused in this way. Professor Konegen, in Stehr's only drama, derives a new attitude towards his

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[24] *Peter Brindeisener,* p. 283.
[25] *Meister Cajetan,* p. 128.
[26] "Es gibt nur Unglücksvolle, Böse nicht." *Trostgesang. Lebensbuch,* p. 185.
[27] *Ibid.,* pp. 124 f.

wife, from an investigation of "basic soul-rhythms." He calls his wife's longing for love and affection shameless, and their physical relationship oppressive.[28] He seeks to lead her to the "higher" sphere which he has attained, the realm of the soul, as he sees it, that point of evolution where the soul must become corporeal. Natural physical attraction and love no longer have any place in this new concept. The suffering and despair of the professor's wife is presented most sympathetically. She continues to plead and hope that the man she loves will find his former normal self again: "Lass es anders werden, Konegen, bücke dich nach mir; sei neben deinem Kopf auch Herz. Mann! Du vertrocknest so. Dies Haus verödet. Die Kinder verwaisen."[29] His priest-like attitude, however, almost drives her into the arms of another man. Yet she remains with him, only to lose her mind and end in suicide. The terrible tragedy shatters Professor Konegen, for too late he realizes his utter failure.

Very similar is the new concept of love evolved by Professor Weitfeld, of *Die Krähen,* and similar, too, is the unhappy outcome. He considers the normal relationship between man and woman as a cage for the spirit and for the soul, and as mere mechanical servitude. For the soul to flourish the physical side must be entirely denied. He demands that his wife be like him, beyond all "modalities," even that of sex. With the fanaticism of an ascetic he declares: "Auch der letzte Hauch ist aus meinem Sexus geschwunden."[30] Thus, he formulates the law of a "new" marital relationship as follows: "Ich, sofern ich Mann bin, bin dir, insofern du Weib bist, von nun an nichts mehr schuldig und umgekehrt. Mit dieser niederen, tierhaften Instanz sind wir endgültig fertig. Damit haben wir von nun an nichts mehr zu schaffen. Wir sind göttlich. Denn an die Seele und Gott reicht auch nicht ein Schimmer des Sexualnexus."[31] And finally, at the height of his rationalization he proclaims: "Die Gemeinschaft der Leiber ist nun überwunden. Die höchste, göttliche Form der Ehe beginnt nun. Nunmehr gilt es, auf der Basis der individuellen Vertiefung, unter Ausmerzung des zerebralen Micels aus dem Mutterboden der spirituellen Energie durch Differenzierung und Potenzierung unserer Persönlichkeit eine höhere, geistige Einheit zu erringen."[32] With this cold exposition he rejects

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[28] *Meta Konegen,* p. 239.
[29] *Ibid.,* p. 218.
[30] *Die Krähen. Das Abendrot,* p. 228.
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Ibid.,* p. 230.

his wife's desperate plea for the kind of love that once had made their marriage so happy. And again Stehr's sympathies are on the side of the woman. Completely unable to understand such love, she is torn from her heaven, crushed and broken. The Professor leaves her, but he is haunted by the consciousness of the wrong done his wife and by taunting doubts of his idea of the super-personality of man. His attempted inner regeneration fails dismally, and he turns to revolutionary agitation against the existing political, social, and economic order. This kind of intellectual love, like sensual love, is no aid to man in finding the way to his true self, and of it, too, Stehr can say: "Wer andere täuscht, enttäuscht die eigne Brust." Weitfeld is one of those individuals who represents an extreme intellectualism, and his tragic end is indicative of the inevitable consequences thereof. Stehr's deprecation of intellectual love is another expression of his general negative attitude towards intellectualism, which has been noted by Victoria Mueller.[33]

A similar concept of intellectual or spiritual love is to be found in the novel, *Leonore Griebel.* It is Stehr's belief, as expressed here, that woman's spiritual love, in the last analysis, finds its fullest realization in her natural sensuousness. By nature a sensitive, dreamy girl, Leonore longs for a romantic love. She attaches her longing to a visiting salesman from a distant city, since her marriage to the practical, stolid cloth-merchant is unhappy and barren. She cannot understand Griebel's accusation that this love is adulterous, for the stranger was only a personification of her romantic dreams. This unreal attitude of Leonore is completely dissipated in the ecstasy of the first proof of her husband's love. "Das stumme Verlangen ihrer vollen Reife wurde erfüllt, der Unfrieden ihrer geistigsten Sehnsucht tauchte unter in dem zeugenden Gleichtakt des Blutes.—Denn alle Geistigkeit des Weibes ist leiblich, und ihr Körper ist die restlose Fülle ihrer Seele. . . ."[34] Nevertheless, the marriage remains a tragedy, for outside of this one moment no lasting balance is found to unite the spiritual and physical sides of love.

The three examples discussed above indicate the failure of a purely intellectual or spiritual love to create and maintain a happy marriage. Stehr's old stone-man, the symbol of the Divine in *Die Legende vom steinernen Mann,* reaches the same conclusion. The couples whom he

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[33] *An Analysis of the Problems in the Work of Hermann Stehr.* Toronto, 1933, p. 228.

[34] *Leonore Griebel,* p. 168.

inspired to marriage never separated, for: "Ohne Leib keine Liebe und ohne Liebe kein Leben, bei diesem Grundsatz blieb der steinerne Mann."[35]

Thus, purely intellectual love is negative; it fails to bring about a permanent and satisfactory union between man and women. For the artist, on the other hand, spiritual love becomes a symbol of the great creative happiness which comes from the self-effacing devotion to art. Love is the great inspiration. Thus the Geigenmacher, who learned all the technique of his art from his master, was still unable to fashion a truly great violin, an instrument which could capture the deepest music of heaven and earth. In vain he sought inspiration in aristocratic society, in the church, and in science. The inspiration he received from the Divine, out in the deep forest alone, was too sublime to be communicable to man. The love of beautiful women brought him no closer to the realization of his artistic dream. In all these spheres of experience, sensual love, society, religion, and science he found "entweder das Blühen ohne Blume oder die Blume ohne Blühen, den Klang ohne Form oder die Form ohne Klingen,"[36] but in his love for Schönlein he found the inspiration to create his master work. This love was in its essence spiritual, a kind of reverence not unlike that for the Virgin. Schönlein appears to the violin-maker, "wie Maler die schlafende Unschuld darzustellen pflegen";[37] his words to her become "eine förmliche Huldigung,"[38] and: "Seine Augen hingen mit so beseligten Blicken an ihrer schlanken Gestalt, wie sie nur Fromme im Anschauen des Allerheiligsten haben können."[39] As he lies awake in his "Heuhimmel" the song of the stars becomes mingled with the song of this beautiful girl. The words, "O sanctissima, o piissima" ring all about him. But the violin-maker is not quite free of desire, and only Schönlein's flight from him establishes the pure spirituality of his inspiration. By her beauty Schönlein reveals to him his own soul and only then can he, in all humility, create the violins that could sing chords of man's love and yearning; "und es war in ihnen auch die Gewalt und Süsse des sinnlichen Menschen in übersinnlichem Mass."[40]

The idea of the renunciation of all desire as a condition for the achievement of the highest artistic expression appears again in *Der*

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[35] *Mythen und Mären,* p. 113.
[36] *Der Geigenmacher,* p. 167.
[37] *Ibid.,* p. 186.
[38] *Ibid.,* p. 192.
[39] *Ibid.,* p. 218.
[40] *Ibid.,* p. 264.

Himmelschlüssel. Here, Pankratius Schiedeck denies himself the love of his wife, lest he lose "die Fähigkeit zum Aufstieg in die übergeistigen Sphären . . . , nach denen seine tiefste Sehnsucht verlangte."[41] This attitude derives from Stehr's belief that the artist creates out of the Divine which is within him and which is stifled by the burden of sensuality. Professor Weitfeld, it is to be remembered, strove towards a similar goal, but his transcendence of the physical led him into the realm of purely intellectual or rational abstraction, which, instead of inspiring him to create, led him to dissolve the ties of family and to incite his fellow-man to revolution. Stehr also touches here upon the problem of the artist, a theme so often treated by Thomas Mann, e.g., in *Tonio Kröger* and *Lotte in Weimar.* Stehr, too, recognizes the great gulf between the man and the artist. In respect to love, the artist must renounce all desire in order to experience the highest inspiration; whereas the normal man, bound to his wife and family, must cherish it, lest all suffer.

Meister Cajetan, like the Geigenmacher, finds his inspiration in pure love, too. In its spirit of reverence and service his love for Marianne is very similar to the medieval *minne.* He showers her with gifts and expresses his devotion in the humble and grateful gesture of kissing her hand. He is supremely happy in this love which "keine Forderung des Besitzes erhob, sondern ihr ganzes Glück in dem verehrungsvollen Dienst an dem schönen Mädchen sah."[42] But when Marianne makes advances to him, he flees and can no longer play his violin. Seeking refuge in the church he is found "in seliger Andacht"; "Ich bin nur so unendlich glücklich," he says, "und habe der Gottesmutter Marie dafür gedankt . . . Bruder Theophil, eigentlich heisst sie doch Marianne."[43] This identification of the beloved with the Virgin Mary is essentially a romantic concept, not unlike Novalis's union of love and religion. Cajetan asks only to be allowed to serve his beloved with his art, and it is for her that he creates his master-violins. This idea of the woman as the "schaffende Kunst" is also in the romantic tradition. E. T. A. Hoffmann's artists, for example, experience a love similar to the Geigenmacher's and Cajetan's and for them, too, a union with the beloved destroys the best in the artist.[44]

Not only does spiritual love inspire the artist, but it also redeems him from his loneliness. Cajetan, as the story opens, knew only a dark

[41] *Der Himmelschlüssel,* p. 54.
[42] *Meister Cajetan,* p. 107.
[43] *Ibid.,* p. 110.
[44] Cf. Kluckholm, *op. cit.,* pp. 602 f.

pain and a heavenly transport, "aber das wohlige, sichere Behagen der Welt kannte er nicht."[45] He was, as are all artists a lonely man, but through his love for Marianne he experiences that wonderful joy of living which he had not known before. Through his love he becomes a real, complete human being. This completion and fulfillment of the man in him is expressed in the violins he now creates. Formerly his violins gave forth a dark, powerful tone in the low register and an ecstatic sweetness of tone in the high, but the tones of the middle register remained dull and hollow. The violins, however, created out of this love for Marianne are perfect in all registers.

In brief, Stehr's view is that love which leans exclusively or even predominantly to the intellectual or spiritual side and hence lacks a natural balance with the physical, is not strong enough to unite man and woman in understanding sympathy and lasting happiness. Spiritual love, however, is an essential, inspirational force of artistic self-realization for the artist and an escape from his loneliness.

(c) EROS

Life is meaningless without love. Again and again throughout Stehr's work the theme of the quest for love appears, now dominant, now secondary. Franz Tone, of the very early story, *Der Schindelmacher,* loses his grasp on life when death takes away his wife. He becomes helpless and dazed; his living loses meaning and sense. He is clearly conscious of the fact that it was the love of his wife which gave his life purpose. Her love was the "Treibriema," which drove the "Schlenkermaschine" of his body.[46] And in his last published work, *Der Himmelschlüssel,* Stehr suggests, half seriously, half humorously, that it is this very human need and desire for love which has kept man prisoner in his own little world. "Without love, no life," is the divine formula already cited in the preceding chapter.

But it has been shown that a purely sensual love and a purely intellectual love tend to destroy life and make impossible any kind of permanent relationship between man and woman. So there must be another love which combines elements of both. And the struggle to find this love is presented in the life of Peter Brindeisener. Peter vacillates between the two opposing loves, represented by Mathinka and Helene. At one time he is swept away by carnal desires, at another he feels him-

[45] *Meister Cajetan,* p. 13.
[46] *Auf Leben und Tod,* p. 201.

self uplifted and inspired by a profound emotion which carries him beyond his selfish pleasures. He flees from the grasping arms of Mathinka to the chaste presence of Helene. But even here he is not able to find any real synthesis, and so he finally turns to renunciation, shunning even the sight of woman. This is strongly reminiscent of the Baroque attitude to love, as for example, in *Cardenio und Celinde,* in Stehr's countryman, Gryphius. Both forces, sensual and spiritual, are shown to exist side by side, in sharpest contrast, with no synthesis attainable. Peter Brindeisener is not the only character in Stehr's work to experience that struggle. Helene Sintlinger perishes when she is unable to achieve a balance between the two worlds. She is drawn out of the world of soul and God by the miracle of love, and when the new world into which she was led is shattered by the denial of her love she seeks a voluntary death. The Geigenmacher was on the point of realizing a harmonious love, but loses it when he allows his senses to rule him. In this case the conflict between the sensual and spiritual elements of love which man experiences is condensed into one dramatic night. Meister Cajetan is also unable to find a synthesis and is crushed.

It is impossible, according to Stehr, to experience a lasting harmonious love unless the individual has found within him the divine essence and has let his life and activity become an emanation thereof. This is the key to Brindeisener's failure in effecting a synthesis of sensual and spiritual love. And this too, is the reason for the similar failure on the part of other principal figures in Stehr. Nathanael Maechler, to be sure, does marry and establish a family, yet he must bury a terrible secret in his bosom which leaves a dark cloud over his wife and child. His love for Lotte, pure and harmonious as it may be, is disturbed and troubled until finally he feels compelled to confess; the shock is too great for Lotte and causes her death.

Young Andreas Sintlinger, the wild carouser, is magically transformed by the miracle of love. There can be no doubt about the purity of his love for his bride,[47] but this is of short duration. Sintlinger is that typical Stehrian character who must, above all, overcome the inner conflicts to find the way to the clear bright light of his soul. But the young Sintlinger has not yet done this, and so he finds even his wonderful love for Johanna disappointing and insufficient. He is lonely; he is not able to share his life with her nor to enter into hers, "denn die Liebe ist ein zu unpersönliches, ein Allgefühl, als dass es über die Stürme der Umarmungen hinaus bis in die Sanddünen unseres alltäglichen Lebens

[47] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 14.

die Seele der Welteinsamkeit entreissen könnte."[48] He goes his way searching, probing, speculating; alone.

It has been suggested that these Stehrian men find love "less important and less valuable" because they are so occupied with "their endeavor to reach a relation with the All."[49] However, this love is really of prime importance to man, as Brindeisener's struggle and words show.[50] But Stehr's contention is that until this "relation with the All" is firmly established within man he cannot experience a completely harmonious and lasting love. Thus, Andreas Sintlinger sinks from the bright happiness of his love for Johanna down into the abyss which he carried within him. In this light young Franz Faber's abandoning Wally can also be understood. His vow to his family can only partly explain that action, whereas his lack of confidence and trust in her,[51] which really cause the tragedy, can best be understood from his own tortured, uncertain inner state. *Der Inspektor* is a variation of the Peter Brindeisener theme on a much smaller scale. Here the fate of Inspector Vogt shows clearly Stehr's contention that the problem of sensual-spiritual love cannot be solved by an act of purely intellectual resolve. The inspector tries valiantly to sublimate his baser emotions by rationally choosing a fine girl, only to find that the salvation must come from within and not from without. In this respect, the most successful man of Stehr's characters is Jochen Maechler. He is not upset by any compelling desire to find a new faith, but seems to have attained a certain inner composure. Thus he is able to achieve a quietly happy and enduring relationship with his wife, Christine. They established a firm and secure little family and the fruit of their love, the "new man," was to redeem the Maechler clan and accomplish what his father and grandfather had unsuccessfully striven for. Man and wife become comrades, who march forward in step though to a different melody.[52] This type of comradeship is the highest form of the marriage-relationship and it occurs but once again in Stehr's work. Although there is but a brief glimpse given of the marriage of Eusebius and Agnete Mandel, their comradeship must have been of long duration and tender happiness, which fact is indicated by the marvelous effect thereof on father and son, even long after the death of the mother. It is interesting to note here too, that Stehr's concept of

[48] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[49] Mueller, V. *op. cit.*, pp. 105 and 107.
[50] "Weil doch alles, was ihre (man's) Grösse ausmache, von den Frauen herstamme." *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 503.
[51] *Drei Nächte*, pp. 333 f. and 338 f.
[52] *Die Nachkommen*, p. 131.

love is anything but static. Poor Eusebius Mandel experiences a lapse into a lower love and must purge himself with the aid of his son.

The vast majority of Stehr's marriages, however, are failures and the cause already mentioned can be found again and again. The emotions, passions, or to use the Spinoza terminology, the "affects," hinder man on his way to God; they destroy the inner balance and relation with the All which is the prerequisite of love. The story, *Gerichtet,* for example, is a vivid flash of a man tortured and crazed by jealousy which not only destroys him but strangles the love and life of his faithful wife.

The ruinous force of pride, in varying shades and degrees, is presented in a number of cases. Johannes Teuber's love is stifled by a false sense of pride and honor; he marries another without love, drives her to an early end and dies himself in delirium.[53] Paul Förster, in *Der Schimmer des Assistenten,* allows his pride to take precedence over his love, thus destroying the "Schimmerbild" (glimpse of his true self); he is haunted ever after by a sense of regret and guilt, because he did not marry the one he loved, but in the face of seeming obstacles chose the road of least resistance. The Countess Borowska, in *Der Besuch,* lets wounded pride freeze the love in her heart and dissolves her marriage, passing her last days in loneliness and bleak coldness that, in the last analysis, came from her own heart. Thaddäus Frenzel, of *Der Feuersamen,* a poor weaver's son risen to wealth and position, marries his servant girl out of hurt pride; he discovers his bride is unfaithful, drives her out and eventually commits suicide. The "affects" of greed and ambition consume Karl Exner's entire emotional life and leave him devoid of any feeling of love.

In the great majority of these tragically unsuccessful marriages it is the man who is at fault. The woman is ready and capable of perfect, i.e., complete and harmonious love. She realizes that her life is not complete until she has found a man with whom she can share it. So impelling is her need and longing that she will leave all she has to find fulfillment of her love. This is the fate of Melanie Negwer, in *Das entlaufene Herz.* Hers is the "run-away heart" which wanders through the world in search of a man worthy and capable of the love that it possesses. It is striking to recall that in his last published work Stehr still considers the man at fault. Despite the high motives of the God-seeker, Pankratius Schiedeck, it is his neglect and failure to understand the importance of love in woman's life which causes the failure of his mission.[54]

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[53] *Der Schatten. Mythen und Mären,* p. 191.
[54] *Der Himmelschlüssel,* pp. 85 ff. and p. 9.

Woman, by her very nature, seems to possess a wonderful inner tranquillity which even though it "looks upon tempests, is never shaken." Marianne, the beloved of Meister Cajetan, was a temptress, a woman of many loves, and yet she was one of those women, "who remain chaste even though they give themselves away every day, for no passion can plumb the depths of woman's soul."

Stehr's noblest women are like children; the breath of the Divine is still about them and permeates their whole being. They have a quiet composure and a sustained calmness. Johanna Sintlinger marches on beside her husband quietly and faithfully. She cannot understand his inner struggle, but she senses his torment and tries to console him with tenderest sympathy. She recovers from the dreadful shock of her daughter's suicide and overcomes her own pain and grief so that she might help her husband find his way out of the gloom and confusion weighing down upon him. The simplicity and genuineness of her character is evident in the charming episode of their first meeting. She hid the flower that he had given her, but at night she brought it forth and laid it under her pillow, deeming it ignoble not to keep a promise. "Denn sie war eine jener seltenen göttlich-gütigen Seelen, die von den Spielen auf der himmlischen Wiese hinter des Herrgotts Rücken in das irdische Leben geschlüpft sind und darum frei auch von jenem Makel im Lichte gehen, den nach der Meinung vieler Christen jeder Mensch als Lehnsnachfolger in der Schuld und Sünde seiner Ahnen zu tragen hat. Solche Menschen werden nur von der Rücksicht auf die Not anderer geführt und wissen um ihre Güte durch nichts als die Erschütterungen über die Leiden des Nächsten."[55] The beauty of this woman's character casts a spell over the son of their ancient enemy. Without describing it Stehr gives the reader a consciousness thereof by showing its effect on the seven year old Peter. He looks at her with awe, as children look at persons they have heard tell about in fairy tales.[56]

Helene Sintlinger is probably one of the most beautiful feminine characters in German literature. Her purity and saintliness; her oneness with God are dynamic realities which Stehr shows by their wonderful effect on others. She sets her father on the right path towards God by her mere heavenly presence, she brings a new soul to the grief-stricken Schwerdtner-woman, she instills a transfigured happiness in the heart of Ursel Rütsch which in turn inspires a rebirth of an old religious sect among the simple folk of Querhoven, and she transforms the farm-

[55] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 14.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

hand, Gottlieb Meixner. She takes away the bitterness and grief from the knife-grinder, Liebeneiner, for he had but to look upon her, "war er weder unglücklich noch arm, hatte keine hungernden Kinder zu Hause, war kein betrogener Mann und sein Weib nicht anders befleckt, als von einem wüsten Traum, der sie ungerufen, wie im Schlafe überfallen hatte."[57] Peter Brindeisener, in all his terrible struggle with an overwhelming sensuality, cherished the vision of her as a hermit worships the image of the Virgin.[58]

Yet this innate oneness with God does not leave woman static, for her being longs for fulfillment and completion in love. She experiences a certain unrest; she feels vague longings. The Heiligenlenlein experiences this profoundly as she feels the presence and effect of love on others. She senses but cannot understand this magic power; she feels it take hold of her whole being and she becomes almost frantic in her endeavor to comprehend it. The upheaval is almost unnoticeable at first, but gradually its intensity increases until it bursts the bonds of her very existence. "In ihrem Innern war es, als öffne sich eine Tür, und ein freies Fluten ergoss sich aus ihr, wie sie es noch in keinem Augenblick des Glückes gespürt hatte. Und nun nahte sich auch das Glänzen, nach dem sie verlangt hatte, aber nicht von oben. Es kam ihr entgegen, dass sogar sein seliges Schreiten zu vernehmen war. Im höchsten Rausch breitete sie die Arme aus, und so, wankend vor Entzücken, näherte sie sich dem Unaussprechlichen, von dem sie fühlte, es sei dasselbe, von dem sie einstmals, hinter der alten Therese her, ein sicheres Ahnen gehabt hatte."[59] In this moment of love-ecstasy woman experiences the fulfillment of her longing and realizes a completeness in her life.

Lenlein's blindness is to be understood symbolically. She can actually see, but her eyes look inward to the world of soul and God. This leaves her a stranger in the phenomenal world. But her humanity generates within her a longing to become a real part of this world to which she, of necessity, belongs. And it is finally the power of love that makes her a full and complete human being. This is "die reine Liebe, die Offenbarung, der Gott des Weibes."[60] That Lenlein must perish, however, of another love has already been indicated.

Although Johanna and Helene Sintlinger are the most perfect of Stehr's women, there are numerous others who possess a like inner

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 436.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 503.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 478.
[60] *Meicke der Teufel. Auf Leben und Tod*, p. 190.

tranquillity and innate oneness with God. There is, for example, the old grandmother, of the story *Die Grossmutter,* who so quietly bore her great unhappiness and serenely sank into death; the poor, simple woman of Gotschdorf who spoke with death himself; Frau Garbe, of *Das letzte Kind,* who moved the angel of death and even the Lord himself with compassion, and finally the symbolic figure of Schönlein, child of nature and God. Lotte and Christine Maechler, of Stehr's last two completed novels, still retain that same beauty of character and peace of soul as they sustain their husbands in the turbulent days of the nineteenth century.

In the novel *Peter Brindeisener,* Stehr speaks of "himmlische" and "irdische" women. The "earthly" women, those who pay for their life with love, have already been discussed in a previous chapter. A "heavenly" woman is one who is innately in harmony with God and who is capable of sacrificing her life for love. She is capable of being completely self-centered in the realization of her longing and her need to love, and at the same time altogether selfless in her concern and sympathy for her beloved. Her love is "das Gefühl, das sich nicht kennt," and therefore it experiences "die Empfindungen Gottes."[61] Liese Plaschke is not asked to give her life for love, but she voluntarily takes her leave from her beloved Faber so that she might free him for his mission. Frau Wiesner, in the story *Das Abendrot,* is long-suffering in her devotion; she even sacrifices her honor in the hope of receiving love from her husband, and finally pays for her love with her life. Meta Konegen jeopardizes her name and family to win back her husband's love, and dies as she fails. Mika, the Inspector's wife, commits suicide out of love for her worthless husband. Frau Stark, in the story *Gerichtet,* endures thirty years of torment from her jealous husband, but so great is her love that she forgives him on her death bed. Upon hearing her husband's confession of his terrible transgression, Lotte Maechler is so deeply moved in sympathy for his suffering that she dies, redeeming his sin with her life. Helene Sintlinger pays for her love with her life too, but her tragedy is even more profound.

The effect of the woman's love-sacrifice on the man is almost without exception positive and redemptive. In the case of Wiesner, Konegen, and Stark the dramatic nature of the events comes to a fitting conclusion with the woman's death itself and consequently there is but a

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[61] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 157.

parting picture given of the man, broken and crushed in the realization of his grievous fault and bowed in remorse. But in other cases the epic quality of the story allows a fuller view of the man. Peter Brindeisener, for example, carries with him the vision of Lenlein as a picture of the Virgin and with it as a charm is eventually able to overcome his sensuality even though it be in a voluntary death. Nathanael Maechler, after years of suffering and vain efforts to find his own salvation, is delivered from the dread feeling of guilt and unrest by his wife's love-death, and is thus prepared for the last step which brings him grace and final redemption. Franz Faber is freed from the chains of his deceased parents and grandparents by the act of Liese's love. He is cleansed of all stain and, thus strengthened, sets out to proclaim his new gospel.

In recapitulation then, it can be said that Stehr's concept of perfect love is that love which comes naturally and of necessity from a heart that is already in harmony with its true self and with God; and is ready and willing to sacrifice even its own existence. This is decidedly not a purely spiritual love; a great deal of its strength and force derives from the physical element. What a tremendous transformation this love effects on Helene Sintlinger. There is real baroque painting in this picture: "Aus dem mondscheinzarten Elflein war, wenn auch noch keine handfeste Dirn, so doch ein Strünklein geworden, das im besten Saften stand. Sonst schwebte sie beim Gehen, als treibe es Laub über den Boden, jetzt federte sie mit stählern entschiedenen Schritten davon. Früher sogen die Hände das, was sie wünschten, sanft und zauberhaft in sich hinein, nun packten die Finger keck und unverweigerlich zu. Sonst erschütterte ihr leises Organ bis in die tiefste Seele, nun schallte nur die Luft von ihrer fröhlichen Stimme und einem Lachen, das kaum abriss. Ihre Augen erholten sich aus dem erfrorenen Weissblau der blicklosen Zeit zu lodernder Tiefe und jähen, fast räuberisch zupackenden Blicken. Ihre Hüften begannen zu wogen. Das zarte Oval ihres Engelgesichtes verschwand unter strotzend gesunden Wangen. Sie ging auf die Arbeit los wie ein Fleissiger, der jahrelang gelähmt gesessen, und auf die Lust und Freude wie ein Hungriger gegen einen gedeckten Tisch. Oft sprang sie mitten in der Arbeit auf, warf jubelnd die Arbeit gen Himmel und rief: 'Kinder, Kinder! Ihr wisst ja gar nicht, wie schon die Welt ist.' "[62] She revels in the natural and healthy happi-

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 500.

ness of the body, for, as we already have seen in the case of Leonore Griebel, all the spirituality of woman is physical. It is in this spirit that the previously cited divine formula, "ohne Leib keine Liebe" is to be understood.

There is no feeling of shame here, not even about the nudeness of the human body, for the innocent lover rejoices in its beauty and receives a doubled pleasure in the happiness it brings the beloved. This does not mean, however, that there is here represented a depreciation of the concept of modesty. One need but recall the effect of the strange dignitary's touch upon Helene,[63] and the reaction of Schönlein when the violin-maker surprised her bathing in the brook to be convinced of the high sense of modesty which Stehr's women possess.

Nor is this naïve sensuousness to be confused with sensuality, for there are certain indications of divine inspiration for this sensuous quality of love. Eusebius Mandel, for example, seems to be drawn at first into the arms of Maruschka by the song of his little son, and this song it is to be remembered, springs symbolically from the child's oneness with God. Mention has already been made how the divine will, presented symbolically in *Die Legende vom steinernen Mann,* fostered and aided the meetings of lovers.

Stehr, shortly before his death at the age of seventy-six, still expressed himself vigorously in favor of the natural sensuousness of love: "die Zeugung als einen Höllenakt zu bezeichnen (ist) ein pfäffischer Kirchenwahn."[64] Almost without exception Stehr's characters are possessed with this innate passionateness. Again and again the reader is surprised to find it glowing forth in the midst of a mythical or legendary, other-wordly atmosphere, as in *Das entlaufene Herz, Geschichten aus dem Mandelhause, Der Geigenmacher, Die Legende vom steinernen Mann,* and *Der Himmelschlüssel.*

The essentially irrational element in Stehr's concept of love is shown also in his attitude towards the marriage ceremony itself. The nature of love is such that it follows its natural course whether or not the ceremony is denied, or refused, or seems impossible. In such cases lovers are united with divine approval, as in the aforementioned *Legende vom steinernen Mann,* where the marriages which followed such unions seem never to have been failures. Religious sanction and legal confirmation are dispensed with. This must not be confused, however,

[63] *Ibid.,* p. 461.
[64] In a letter to the author; April 10, 1940.

with the free-love tendencies of some of Stehr's contemporaries, for there is always present the intention of a permanent relationship to follow.

Baron von Schillingkhoff and Countess Eleonore von Shayn-Winternetz, in the novel *Die Nachkommen,* are kept apart by difference in social rank, but the reluctant parents are forced to consent to a marriage when it becomes known that Eleonore is going to be a mother. That there is nothing wanton or, from Stehr's point of view, immoral in this is quite clear from Stehr's description of the consummation. "Dort besiegelten die beiden Unglücklichen den Seelenschwur ihrer Liebe mit den Leibern."[65] But even more striking is the case of Nathanael and Lotte Maechler. There are no impediments in their way; both are earnest, serious people, and Lotte is definitely orthodox in her outlook, yet when they discover their love they do not wait for any official ceremony. It is sufficient for these Stehrian characters to experience the wonderful power of love and to follow its natural course to complete union. In this respect Stehr's conviction of the all-importance of the really profound emotion of the individual as the motivation for his actions transcends bourgeois morality.

Mention has been made previously of the baroque nature of Stehr's presentation and treatment of the love-problem, i.e., in the aspect of its God-world, spiritual-sensual conflict. Stehr's language, in so far as it speaks of love and lovers, is also strongly flavored with baroque elements. This is not at all strange, for the literary historian of the racial-geographical school is quick to point out that Stehr's native Silesia was also the principal locale of the Baroque and the home-land of Gryphius, Silesius, and Günther. There is in Stehr's language the same dynamic element, the same generous and luxuriant use of the unusual or intense adjective, and the same particular flair for the antithetical compound noun.[66]

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[65] *Die Nachkommen,* p. 230.

[66] There is ample material for a special study in this field, and so a few examples will have to suffice here. *Peter Brindeisener* and *Der Geigenmacher* are the most baroque in general style of all Stehr's works, which is doubtless due to their very nature; the one presenting a struggle between sensual and spiritual forces, and the other being such a remarkable mixture of the concrete and the abstract (cf. Hofacker, E. *Aeusseres und Inneres in Stehr's Geigenmacher;* Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht. März, 1936). In a single passage, for instance, of thirty-two lines from three connected paragraphs of the former, the following vocabulary is used: "lodernde, süsse, berauschte Worte; kochende Worte; mich ein Taumel packte; glühenden Küssen; sogen; bebte; tobte; Amokläufer der Brunst" (pp.

It has been shown that the majority of marriages in Stehr's works are failures and that in most cases the man is at fault. "The good Lord," Stehr once wrote," endowed woman's heart with a stronger spark, and so it seems she is more capable of love."[67] Stehr's women are, almost without exception, beautiful characters, already in harmony with their true selves and God, and filled with a great longing for love. For this love they are capable of great sacrifice and are, at times, the means now of redemption, now again of inspiration for their beloved.

It has often been asked where Stehr found his inspiration for his wonderful women characters and answered simply, "dass diese aufrecht durch den Lebenskampf schreitenden Frauen, die auf rätselhafte Weise in Gott zu leben scheinen, ein Abbild von des Dichters eigener wunderbarer Frau seien."[68] This wonderful woman is not only the inspiration for Stehr's feminine characters but also plays an important part in all his creative activity. It is not mere coincidence that Stehr's "letzte grosse Entscheidung"[69] came in his Pohldorf time, for he married Hedwig Nentwig early in this period. To her he has dedicated his first and last page.[70] She has inspired him in all his work:

> Alle Fäden, die ich spinne,
> laufen doch in dir zusammen.
> Was ich schaue, tu und sinne,
> war in dir schon Lebensflammen.[71]

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191 f.). This is an astounding abundance of baroque language, full of the dynamic and the excessive. Similarly, in one paragraph from the *Geigenmacher* appear the following: "in die letzte Fiber seines Wesens; von einer solchen Glutwoge gepackt; mit dem fiebernden Vorsatz; diese Raublust seiner Liebe" (pp. 247 f.). Here again, as in the baroque love-lyric, is the remarkable interplay and counter-harmony of the erotic-concrete and the platonic-abstract, in both content and form. The elements of *Diesseitigkeit* and *Jenseitigkeit* in the love between the violin-maker and Schönlein are left to stand side by side in glaring, shrill contrast; strongly reminiscent of the Baroque. Stehr's verse also shows baroque characteristics, as for example:

> Ich will dein Inneres umfangen,
> ich lechze nach deiner Seele!

(*Der Mittelgarten,* p. 47. Cf. also *"Sehnsucht nach wilder Liebe," ibid.,* p. 62.)

[67] *Das Märchen vom deutschen Herzen;* Mythen und Mären, p. 131.

[68] Mueller, V. *Was wir in Amerika an Hermann Stehr lieben;* Schlesische Monatshefte. Febr., 1939, p. 57.

[69] In a speech (1932) quoted by Taubitz, F.; *Stätten des Werdens und Wirkens, ibid.,* p. 46.

[70] *Der Mittelgarten,* p. 56.

[71] *Ein ehlich Liebeslied; Lebensbuch,* p. 83. Cf. also *Geburtstagsgruss in der Ferne; ibid.,* pp. 248 ff.

But unlike his Geigenmacher and Meister Cajetan, Stehr does not allow himself to destroy his inspiration or be destroyed by it:

> Dieselbe Glut in meiner Seele
> da du nun mein geworden bist,
> nicht Furcht vor irgend einem Fehle,
> du mein, ich dein mit ganzer Seele,
> da du nun mein geworden bist.
>
> Der Zauber blieb auf deinem Bilde,
> ob du auch mein geworden bist.[72]

Throughout Stehr's intensely autobiographical poetry runs the thread of this love which inspired and sustained him. Like Johanna Sintlinger his wife was ever at his side, quietly and faithfully, and yet there seems to have been more between them than was the case with the Sintlingers, for Stehr happily admits the presence of a deeper bond of understanding:

> Und klopft dir treu nicht nachts und tags
> ein andres Herz zur Seite,
> das liebend vorgefühlten Schlags
> dir stets gibt das Geleite?![73]

With her he shared his sorrows and joys. To her Stehr dedicated the story of *Das letzte Kind,* with the wish:

> Und wenn's auch dich erlöst von alten Schmerzen,
> So ist es doppelt teuer meinem Herzen.

And when his first great happiness came in a letter of praise and recognition from Gerhart Hauptmann he hastened to read it to his wife, experiencing a doubled joy in her happiness.[74] Their love grew ever deeper, calmer, and stronger, a token of which is the moving poem, *Liebeslied des Alten,* written in the twenty-fifth year of their

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[72] *Der Mittelgarten,* p. 49. Cf. also *Wir Zwei; ibid.,* p. 54, and *Gebet; ibid.,* p. 53.
[73] *Zu meinem 53. Geburtstag; Lebensbuch,* p. 252.
[74] *Mein Leben,* p. 24.

marriage. The measure is slow-moving and sustained, the thought is tender and gracious; there is still warmth, but now transformed:

Du mir, Geliebte, von dem Glanz
des stillgewordnen Herzens neu geschenkt,
ich sah dich wieder aufblühn ganz,
als sei mein Geist in frühste Glut versenkt,

da leidenschaftlich sich das Glück
erträumter Bilder in dein Wesen hob
und es in Schönheit meinem Blick
nah' einem Engelsbilde göttlich hob.

Jetzt strahl'st du wieder so, ob auch
der Kummer Asche stob in deine Haare;
verklärter weht um dich der Hauch,
der blühende, vergangner Jugendjahre.

Denn Zeit nimmt vieles, doch noch mehr
beschert sie treuen Menschen hohe Gaben:
Was unser Leben macht so schwer,
das wird der Seele himmlisch eingegraben.[75]

In his sixtieth year Stehr spoke once of their long comradeship with a charming touch of humour, which, as is often the case, says so much more than wordy praise. "Seit meinem 30. Jahr bin ich verheiratet und habe altmodischerweise immer noch dieselbe Frau."[76] Further consideration of Stehr's marriage must be left to his future biographer, but so much may be said here, that although in most of his works Stehr presents unhappy or tragic marriages, he himself was spared that fate.

Both as father and poet, Stehr had a loving and understanding interest in children. With remarkable skill he has unfolded the child's world of play and dream. How meaningfully the childhood of Lenlein is revealed to the reader! And how beautifully the boyhood of Amadeus Mandel and Damian Maechler! Stehr's own words come to mind as we read about these children: "Wir erleben die Jesuworte als süsseste Wahrheit: 'Lasset die Kindlein zu mir kommen, denn solchen ist das

[75] *Lebensbuch,* p. 283.
[76] Hönig, J. *Hermann Stehr,* Die Bücherwelt 1927, pp. 337 f. quotes from the Stehr number of Wanderer im Riesengebirge, 1. Febr., 1924. Nr. 486, 44. J.

Reich Gottes.' "[77] Yet one does not think of any of these children as single individuals, but rather as pairs of boys and girls, of Lenlein and Peter, Amadeus and Veronika, Damian and Sessi. The one without the other is almost unthinkable. Already in this early period of life, the significance of love is clearly evident. Peter's fate, for instance, is foreshadowed in his boyhood relationship with Lenlein and Mathinka, though the epic nature of the ancestral feud between two houses caused Stehr to move the final and decisive action in the two novels to a later period. In the other two cases, however, the action is complete in the childhood relationship.

Here love acts as a wonderful redeeming force. Little Amadeus is first represented as a supremely happy child, joyous in the world of fancy and make-believe that his father spins about him and blissfully content with his song. This song comes to him from his mother in heaven and is a symbolic expression of his closeness to the Divine. But when the sensual mute, Maruschka, hovers about his father, the song dies in his throat. At this point he meets little Veronika and the happiness they enjoy together inspires Amadeus to his song once again. But his father falls victim to Maruschka and the spirit of sensuality settles over the house. The small child is stifled by it and falls sick. Soon, however, he believes he sees the image of Veronika appear to him and he wanders out into the night towards her house. Just as he is about to walk into the pond, following a beam of moonlight which seems to lead to his mother in heaven, his father finds him and brings him back home. As a result of this experience father and son are united again, the mute is banished from their home, the spirit of the child's mother comes to live again in the hearts of both, and Amadeusla's song bursts forth anew. The fact that the child mistook the image of his mother for that of the girl does not in any way lessen the significance of the bond between the two children, but rather gives it a new value, a feeling of dependency and a longing for a reunion of mother and child on the one hand, and on the other it indicates already in this child that force of love which tends to merge mother and beloved in one person. This love is more spiritual in nature and is akin to that which the creative artist feels, particularly in its inspirational force.

The world of the later novel, *Die Nachkommen,* is more real and factual for it is anchored in the historical background of nineteenth

[77] Spoken to Hans-Christoph Kaergel, *op. cit.,* p. 158.

century Germany and so the love-relationship is given more concrete and detailed place. Like the Geigenmacher and Meister Cajetan the little eight year old Damian Maechler is a creative artist. His paintings are described as colorful and mature in conception. And like Cajetan he wants to present his work to his beloved. This same spirit of service to the loved one was indicated as a characteristic of spiritual love. Damian, too, falls sick when he is parted from his beloved. But here the similarities cease. The love that draws Damian and Sessi together is a constructive, redemptive force. The sinking child is attended in vain by the doctor, but love, the heavenly healer, effects the recovery. Damian's sickness is not so much a physical as a metaphysical state. He suffers from an insufficiency, from a deprivation of something which is an integral part of his being. The return of Sessi is really a reunion, a re-entry into his former blissful relation with the Divine and although the novel ends at this point, Stehr indicates that the offspring of their union will be the salvation of the Maechler family.

The real significance of this love can only be understood when it is recalled that the Maechlers were striving for a new pattern of life, a pattern which would find its strength and beauty in an active synthesis of *Gnade* and *Recht* (which two concepts are the substance of the Maechler prayer). What Nathanael failed to achieve in his restless activity and service to others, and what even the church could not give him, what Jochen failed to attain in his retiring, passive life, is finally accomplished (though unfortunately only by indication) by the pure love of the two children. Stehr ends his novel with confident hope of a new future: "sie hörten in der Vogelstimme Damians das Lied der Zukunft ihres geretteten Geschlechtes."[78]

It has been mentioned earlier in this chapter in connection with the discussion of Stehr's concept of a "heavenly" woman, how real love tends to lead the individual beyond and above selfish interests. The willingness to sacrifice is a clear indication of the victory over one's self, for there is not a trace of a desire for reward in any of the cases. The individual is moved from an egocentric consciousness to an altruistic outlook. This represents a transition from the "I" (*Ichbeziehung*) to the "You" (*Dubeziehung*). It is experienced by Johanna Sintlinger, Liese Pleschke, Lotte Maechler, Christine Maechler, Amadeus Mandel, and Damian Maechler.

The love between man and woman effects a complete transcendence

[78] *Die Nachkommen,* p. 257.

of the empirical existence, and brings about a contact of the two souls. Peter Brindeisener gave expression to this experience when he said: ". . . mir war es oft, als berührte sie (Helene) mit Ausschaltung des Körpers, wie von hinterwärts, meine Seele mit der ihren."[79] This, however, can only be a momentary experience, for earthly limitations anchor man too firmly to the empirical world. It is but a step from the complete dissolution of the subjective existence which love effects, to perfect anonymity for both lovers. In the moments of perfect union they pass beyond everything human into a realm where all identities are dissolved. It is like the night where the outlines of objects become vague and the objects themselves seem to fuse together into one. In *Nathanael Maechler* and *Die Nachkommen* Stehr employs the symbol of night to indicate the anonymity into which lovers pass,[80] for this is a state which cannot be described by words. "Wir wissen wohl, wenn wir lieben. Wir trinken selig den süssen Kelch und doch von den Sekunden des tiefsten Versenkens, des Einswerdens zwischen Mann und Weib, weiss niemand etwas zu sagen. Jeder lebt in diesen zeitlosen Sekunden in der völligen Anonymität seines Wesens."[81] This is the "unenträtselbares Geheimnis"[82] of which Stehr speaks, and a part of the "ineffabile" which Milch mentions.[83] Lovers like poets, children, heroes, and saints, hold the key to the "wahres Ich des Menschen," to the soul, to God. In the moments of their most complete ecstasy they pass into a state of anonymity: "In einer Gegend ohne Ort, ohne Raum, ohne Zeit, jenseits ihres Bewusstseins und aller Welt, in dem höchsten, wahren Glück unnennbarer Seligkeit."[84]

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[79] *Peter Brindeisener,* p. 248.
[80] *Nathanael Maechler,* p. 233 and *Die Nachkommen,* p. 90.
[81] To Hans-Christoph Kaergel, *op. cit.,* p. 157.
[82] In a letter to the author, op. cit.
[83] *Hermann Stehr,* Berlin, 1934, p. 56.
[84] *Faustgedanken, op. cit.,* p. 156.

4. Mankind

If one were to limit his view of Stehr's *Weltanschauung* to the early works, let us say up to *Wendelin Heinelt* (1909), he would have a somber picture, almost uniform in its darkness and gloom. Characteristic of this period would be the line from *Der begrabene Gott:* "Wir können uns gegenseitig nicht helfen."[1] There are in fact, few instances of any desire to help a fellow-man at all. In the story of *Der Graveur,* for instance, it is man's indifference and aversion to his fellow-man which speeds the disintegration of Schramm's once fine character and drives him to insanity and suicide. The conduct of the landlord best represents the general treatment which, with but a few exceptions, the poor fellow receives. Despite the fact that Schramm had been deprived of his speech by a savage blow from his brother and was trying to readjust himself to society, the landlord turned him out. For a moment he wondered where the "crazy fellow" would go, then shrugged his shoulders: " 'Den sollte man eigentlich nicht so herumlaufen lassen. Der müsste eigentlich nach Scheibe. Aber lieber schweigen, ruhig sein. Da muss die Gemeinde für so ein elendes Subjekt wieder bluten. Lauf' zu, ich hab' meine Sache!' schloss der edle Menschenfreund seinen gemurmelten Monolog, lachte auf, pfiff die abgerissene Polka weiter und wandte sich behäbigen Schrittes seiner Wohnung zu."[2]

The short-story, *Der Schatten,* presents another case of a "sick" man's recovery thwarted by the cruelty of his supposed friends. One of Johannes Teuber's colleagues, spurred on by the malicious joy of discovering a scandal, succeeds in tracing Teuber's strange behaviour to an unhappy love affair. The result is that the fever of the past comes over the unfortunate Teuber once again, and he goes to pieces.

The greed, distrust, and cruelty of Karl Exner dominate the novel, *Der begrabene Gott.* Against this the concern and sympathy for the lives of others in the person of the old Brunnenbauer Freiwald seems but a feeble light. He alone of the village folk is kind towards the hot-headed club-foot and counsels him. But the old man dies of the shock

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[1] P. 278.
[2] *Auf Leben und Tod,* p. 103.

of finding the decayed body of Exner's only friend at the bottom of the well. The atmosphere of hostility and distrust is too heavy and it overwhelms the kind old man and his quiet love.

This pall of pessimism in the early works is but the expression of Stehr's own inner state. An almost unending succession of misfortunes and repeated sickness plagued him; profound doubts and violent protestations against fate rake his very soul:

> Gleich einer Wunde, schwärend, nievernarbt,
> ist dies mein Leben! Wie hab' ich gedarbt,
> ehrlich gerungen, selber mich gewagt
> und hab' geglaubt, dass es doch einmal tagt.
>
> Mit Hammerlärm ward manches Jahr erfüllt,
> ich hab' in Dunkel mich vor mir verhüllt
> und dachte, wenn auf Zeit ich von mir fort,
> dass mein Unsegen nahrungslos verdorrt.[3]

Köhler even sees in the rage and fury of *Der Schindelmacher* Stehr's own outburst against his persecutors.[4]

Stehr wrestled with fate; buried the old faiths and groped for new meanings. "Mit meinem Schicksal führ' ich grimmen Streit,"[5] he called to his deceased mother, many times in those years. Many a night he struggled with the storms in his heart and listened to the wind and rain rage about his cabin. The gurgling sound of the water in the gutters seemed to him like the choking of a child: "Das bin ich, das ist meine Seele, die man hier in der Oede erdrosselt, sagte ich fast verzweifelt in mich hinein, wühlte mein Gesicht in die Kissen und schluchzte los, bis mich der Nachhall meines lauten Weinens in dem leeren Raum zur Besinnung brachte, dass ich die Zähne ingrimmig aufeinanderbiss, mich wegen Memmenhaftigkeit ausreichend beschimpfte und trotzig und trockenen Auges einschlief."[6] But the struggle was not futile, for through it Stehr found the way to peace and happiness. He plumbed the depths of his soul and discovered that it alone remained unchanged like the stable axle around which the wheel of life revolves.[7] It was then that he came to the realization that that which he was seeking as God without him was also within him, in his soul. Thus anchored in

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[3] *Alter Spuk; Lebensbuch,* p. 38.
[4] Köhler, W. *Hermann Stehr,* Schweidnitz, 1927, p. 43.
[5] *Gespräche mit meiner gestorbenen Mutter; Lebensbuch,* p. 34.
[6] *Mein Leben,* p. 12.
[7] *Der letzte Akt; Das Abendrot,* p. 95.

eternity he turned his eyes to the temporal world about him, but sustained and strengthened now by the revelation of his true self.

He felt called, like a new prophet, to proclaim a new gospel:

> Du kannst dich nie verlieren ganz,
> nie fassen deinen vollen Glanz.
> Denn du bist ewig ohne Mass
> und auch zugleich das Stundenglas.
> Du bist die Erde und der Schritt,
> der Bogen und des Pfeiles Schnitt,
> bist Meer und Welle auf einmal,
> das Licht und auch der flücht'ge Strahl,
> gewesen, so du nie beginnst,
> und immer, wenn du dich besinnst.[8]

This was Stehr's first message: the all-important responsibility of the individual to his true self, to the soul, to the "Gottesgrund." Man should strive "seine Seele wirkend und handelnd in seinem Leben zur Entfaltung zu bringen. . . ."[9] This fulfillment of the self is a "sacred egotism," the means and not the goal. And out of it is derived Stehr's second message: "Nach diesem heiligen Egoismus, dem einzigen, der den Menschen erlaubt ist, handeln, bedeutet zugleich den wahren, echten, lebendigen Altruismus oder Gemeinschaftsgeist. . . ."[10] The outline of the final form that it was to take was already expressed in the poem, *Aufstehen,* from the year 1913:

> Aufstehen! —Wisst Ihr, was das ist?
>
> Nicht bloss aus warmem Bett ins Kühle,
> nicht aus der Nacht in helles Tagen.
> Nein, aus Qual in Glück, aus Not in Jubel,
> aus Darben in geschenkte Fülle,
> aus finstrer, heisser, geiler Brunst
> ins helle Lachen reinsten Lichtes,
> und aus des Geizes enger Schwärze
> tief in ein Leben, das durch Geben
> nur reicher wird und durch die Güte
> beherrscht die Herrschaft aller Herrscher.
> Das heisst aufstehn![11]

[8] *Der Mensch; ibid.,* p. 37.
[9] *Faustgedanken, op. cit.,* p. 157
[10] *Ibid.,* p. 158.
[11] *Lebensbuch,* pp. 179 f.

Stehr's concept of love among men is affirmative and cheerful, selfless, but dynamic. Before attempting, however, to draw a more complete picture of it, it shall be necessary to consider its gradual development as it is unfolded in his works.

First to be considered are a number of cases which represent a transition-stage, or partial realization of the true altruistic activity. Let us turn then to Frau Nageln, *das Gotschdorfer Weib*. She is really not the central figure of the story, however, for that is death, a war-weary, staggering death, glutted with human blood. But before considering this woman it is interesting to note how and why the wonderful events of this tale were revealed to the poet. The following passage is, to be sure, a poetic frame for the tale, but beyond this it is the profession of Stehr's profound sympathy for his fellow-man. The story seems to have sprung from the poet's desire to assure the world that the dreadful carnage of the war must soon come to an end: "Ich, der ich diese Geschichte erzähle, habe sie von der kleinen Birke auf dem Gotschdorfer Felde, die alles mit angesehen hat. Ich stand eines Morgens neben ihr, schaute in das schöne Tal um mich, bis an die Mauer des Riesengebirges, und wurde im Anblick des Friedens traurig über die Verwüstung und die Trümmer, die dieser Krieg in so viele Länder getragen hat, und über die hunderttausend Brüder, die auf Nimmerwiedersehn in den Krieg gezogen sind. Da erglänzte die kleine Birke plötzlich in rötlichem Frühlingslicht durch die ganze Krone hin, und sie vertraute mir die tröstliche Geschichte von dem armen Gotschdorfer Weibe."[12] According to the story, Frau Nageln encounters death one day before the Christmas of 1916. In her conversation with him she expresses a deep sympathy for the suffering men and women of a world at war, and begs him to terminate his fury. But her concern is not altogether unselfish, for her love for her soldier-husband is always uppermost in her mind.[13]

A very unusual figure is old Frau Kleideck, of the story *Die Grossmutter*. She has the faculty of being able to take upon herself the sickness and suffering of others, thus relieving them and bringing about almost invariably the recovery of those she attends. Hers is a sympathy, in the literal meaning of the word, "to feel or suffer along with." But her love is incomplete in two respects; first, it is limited to her family and secondly it is directed towards maintaining the mere

[12] *Mythen und Mären,* p. 150.
[13] *Ibid.,* p. 141.

empirical existence, rather than revealing the true meaning and goal of life. Both the Gotschdorfer Weib and the Grossmutter represent a limited, circumscribed altruism.

The case of Elis Meixner, of *Der Heiligenhof,* is most interesting for it shows, paradoxically, a negative altruism. Elis was once a well-to-do "Grossbauer," dubbed "Prahl-Meixner" by the folk, but went bankrupt, took to drink, and caused the suicide of his wife. At this point a remarkable change came over him. He stopped drinking, returned to the simple craft which he had left for fame and fortune, and attached himself to the Querhovener Anabaptists, a pious humble religious group. But unlike them, he can not find inner tranquillity; in his penance he turns to self-castigation and in his zeal for reform he resorts to force. His protests in behalf of the town-folk against the action of the church authorities are justifiable, but his incitations to revolt lead to disaster; a small group of men follow the Prahl-Meixner in an attack against the village priest, who is killed by a stone thrown from the crowd. Too late, Sintlinger arrives and admonishes the assaulters: "Ihr wollt euern Glauben behalten. Man kann einem Menschen den Bissen aus den Zähnen, aber niemals, mit keiner Macht, den Glauben aus der Seele reissen. Das kann jeder nur allein durch eigenes Unrecht, das er tut. Gewalttat aber ist immer Unrecht."[14] After one last outburst of rage, Meixner realizes his wrong and leaves the gathering in contrition. He is found, in a kneeling position, hanged. Meixner's failure lies in the fact that he followed the wrong course, the course of external compulsion and force, as witness his mortification of the flesh in his efforts to find peace, and his acts of violence in his efforts to help his fellow-man.

Somewhat similar are the cases of Professor Weitfeld, of *Die Krähen,* and Ignaz Wildner, of *Nathanael Maechler.* As he watches a crow one day calmly sitting atop a manure pile, the professor interprets the scene symbolically: the crow represents the unchanging, eternal soul in man, independent of all time and all space; the manure pile, the empirical world. Once arrived at this final realization, he seeks to regulate his life accordingly. "Er wollte alles von seiner letzten, göttlichen Instanz, von seiner Seele her, entscheiden lassen, nicht in Willkür handeln, sondern nur auf den unbeeinflussten Anstoss seines Schicksals hin wirken."[15] So far he is on the right road, but he soon falls into the old "Relativitätsschwindel des Denkens" and the symbol

[14] *Der Heiligenhof,* pp. 356 f.
[15] *Das Abendrot,* p. 202.

of the crow becomes a mere idea to him.[16] He becomes obsessed with the all-importance of the soul and the inner life. He speaks of a new love, a purely spiritual union deprived of all corporeality, and this leads to the dissolution of his marriage. He, too, is profoundly stirred by the horrors of the war as he sees it about him, in the starving little girl, the wounded soldier, and the bereaved mother, and he is mentally upset by his harrowing dream of the chaos into which all mankind is speeding. Half-mad, he leaves his wife and sets out into the Riesengebirge. Every once in a while he appears to incite some soldiers to revolt to end the war and begin a new humanity, or to reproach a lonely inn-keeper for sleeping in a warm bed while his fellow-men were dying and bleeding and raging like beasts. He is last heard of in the Berlin uprisings at the head of a band of Communists, where he is shot and killed. Professor Weitfeld's activity was pure in its motive, but false in its resort to force and revolution. It is interesting to note here, too, that Stehr in like manner indicates the futility and falseness of the revolutionary movements themselves which form part of the background of the story: "Sein (Weitfeld's) fanatischer Idealismus war so rein und so verbrecherisch wie der Eisners und Landauers (Führer der Kommunisten)."[17]

Like Meixner and Weitfeld, Ignaz Wildner in *Nathanael Maechler,* strives to further the external welfare of man (social and political conditions) by resorting to violence. He became involved on one occasion in a local disturbance and was severely beaten by the police. When he recovered he had lost his mind. The poor fellow wanders in and out of the story, ranting about the new humanity. He has become a pitiable but ludicrous figure, either ignored, or mocked and intentionally provoked by the people. His way is ineffective and disastrous. Wildner's name is symbolic and it seems justifiable to press the point further and see in him a symbolic representation of the revolutionary spirit in general that was loose in Germany during the first half of the nineteenth century and which serves as a background for the novel. Like him it was inspired by Utopian dreams, was brutally suppressed, flickered again ineffectively for a short period, and finally ended in a farce and a sort of "Geisteskrankheit."[18] This interpretation is also consistent with Stehr's attitude towards political revolution.[19]

[16] Freitag, E., *op. cit.,* pp. 283 f.
[17] P. 257.
[18] Pp. 115 f.
[19] Cf. pp. 114 ff. and also chapter on nation.

Nathanael Maechler himself participated as a young man in the attempts to bring about a new order by force and violence, but he learned from the coots (Wasserhühner) the futility of violent actions and the advantages of peace and order within.[20] So he settles down as a tanner's apprentice and strives through honest actions and helpful deeds to attain his goal. "Denn das wissen wir beide," he says to his master, "wenn eine schlechte Haut besser werden soll, so zerschneidet man sie nicht, sondern macht behutsam das Aas heraus. Die Revolutionsesel aber haben die Haut kreuz und quer durchschnitten und sich um das Aas nicht gekümmert."[21] Maechler's problem is expressed in the old family prayer; he however, seeks to establish a new synthesis of *Recht* (right living, integrity and service to others) and *Gnade* (peace and order within). "Will's der Mensch besser haben, so muss er es selbst machen. Wenn wir dem Recht den Weg bauen, dann, aber nur dann kann die Gnade zu uns fahren."[22] With this in mind he sets out in altruistic activity; he gives new life to the old unhappy Wennrich, brings about the repentance of the wayward Neefe, mediates a dispute between his town and neighboring Scherichsdorf, settles the controversy between the town and the influential count, is elected "Gemeindevorsteher," checks a panic engendered by the people's hysterical fear of war, and has a new water-supply system built for the town. Finally, however, despite all this, he realizes he has not been able to win inner tranquillity and happiness. The former unrest and rebellious spirit flares up within him and he is unable to free himself of the feeling of guilt toward the mountain-girl.[23] The sacrifice of his wife in death brings him the complete realization of the futility of attempting to win *Gnade* through *Recht*.[24]

Through his failure, however, Maechler has approached the great secret "dass zwischen der Forderung nach dem Individualismus eines grossen reinen Selbst und der Forderung der Welt, das Ich in den Dienst der Gesamtheit zu stellen, kein Gegensatz, sondern nur die Bindung von Ursache und Wirkung besteht."[25] Nathanael's son, Jochen, endeavors in his way to make the synthesis, but he too ". . . muss Schiffbruch erleiden, sein Rechtsbegriff ist falsch, weil ihm der Gedanke

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[20] *Ibid.*, pp. 92 ff.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 130.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 153, and similarly p. 147.
[23] *Ibid.*, 267, 270 f., and 286.
[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 329 f.
[25] *Was bedeutet der Jugend das Buch?* (1932); *Das Stundenglas*, p. 121.

der Gemeinschaft mangelt, und als er, um das Leben seines Kindes zu retten, den Weg zu Gott sucht, da ist ihm auch dieser Weg verstellt."[26]

The very crux of the problem which faces man according to Stehr lies in the relationship of this *Gnade* and *Recht* of the Maechler novels. Man must establish a relation with God and the soul within, and then a relation with the world and his fellow-man about him, or as Milch expressed it: "Die Harmonie als die einzig berechtigte Zielsetzung menschlichen Daseins ergibt sich nur aus einem Nebeneinander und Ineinander von Gnade und Recht."[27] Little wonder that the majority of Stehr's characters fail in the face of such a lofty goal! There are, however, several notable examples of more or less successful fulfillment.

The old Trine, nurse to Helene Sintlinger, has attained this harmony; it gives her a quiet happiness in life and a calm expectation of death. Her life rests in God[28] and her activity is so completely directed to the service of others that she has all but lost her name. How she arrived at this harmony Stehr does not show; perhaps, if we recall the discussion of the "heavenly woman," it is because she is a woman: "Ob es in ihrer frühen Jugend einst anders gewesen war, das wusste sie selber nicht; denn vielleicht durch das Leben und die Lehren ihrer Eltern, vielleicht am meisten durch ihre Art war sie dazu gebracht worden, ihre eigenen Hoffnungen und Wünsche nie anders denn als machtlos gaukelnde Schmetterlinge zu betrachten, die von dem Luftzug des Gefährts, auf dem das Leben ihrer Herrschaft davonzog, aufgewirbelt, eine Strecke mitgenommen wurden und sich dann irgendwohin verloren, ohne ihr nahegekommen zu sein."[29] But she is nevertheless only a subordinate figure, as is also the venerable Vanlyssender. He was the leader of the "Menschenchristen" of Querhoven, the pious folk who found the way to God, "nur mit der Frömmigkeit des erhobenen Herzens und in werktätiger Liebe zueinander."[30] This "grosser, reiner Mensch," perhaps the prototype of the old man in the poem *Der Monolog des Greises,*[31] by the example of his own life and death, revealed to his followers the victory and transfiguration in death which is part of the good life.

Turning from the minor characters to the principal figures we come to Wendelin Heinelt, Anton Gudnatz, Andreas Sintlinger, and Franz

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[26] Milch, W., *op. cit.*, p. 53.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[28] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 425.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 171.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 362.
[31] *Lebensbuch*, pp. 293.

Faber. With the story of Wendelin Heinelt, Stehr strives to express the inexpressible, the final realities: "Es ist die Sphäre, wo die letzten menschlichen Werte gelten; Werte, die nur symbolisch erfasst und nahegebracht werden können,"[32] and consequently this story is to be understood symbolically.

A detailed interpretation of its symbolism is given by Freitag in his dissertation on Stehr.[33] The story in its simplest condensation, tells of a poor workman who, like all men, seeks his own happiness. Through the purity of his soul (der mondhellen Nacht) he finds the way into the depths of his being. There he meets the man with the two different stockings (das empirische Ich und das wahre Ich), who gives him a glass-eye (das übersinnliche Schauen Gottes). He sinks into his soul (den Brunnen) and passes from there into a spacious room (den Gottesgrund des Weltalls) where he sees his fellow-men. From above shines the divine light upon the chosen few. Suddenly a flame (unio mystica) strikes a handsome youth and, singing, he enters "ins Jenseits der göttlichen Allverbundenheit." The others whom the flame does not touch, sink to the ground and return, in death, to God. ("Sie starben recht in den Himmel und die Unvergänglichkeit hinein.") Heinelt cannot see any difference between the unio mystica and death. All at once a tear of God strikes a neighbor beside him and he sinks to the ground. Unmindful of his own happiness, which he was soon to receive, Heinelt catches him in his arms. "Er rettet ihn vom Tode, führt ihn in die schöne Gotteswelt zurück auf den Weg des Lebens. Er verzichtet auf die Flamme, auf den Gesang des Gerechten, um dem Nächsten zu helfen. Das ist das höchste Glück, wodurch er das Glasauge, die Gottesschau, verliert um es als Vollendeter unbewusst zu besitzen in seiner restlosen, göttlichen Nächstenliebe (der Samyaksam Budda). Das ist die Gottesmacht, welche Steine in Brot verwandelt und die Heinelt, wie seinen Nachkommen, über das eigene Glück geht." Heinelt demonstrated by his action the harmony of *Gnade* (here, the sinking into the depths of his soul) and *Recht* (the selfless active assistance to his fellow-man).

But there is one important element, neglected by Freitag and elsewhere only indicated by Krebs,[34] which is very significant for our consideration here, namely the strongly Christian flavor. When Heinelt awoke the following morning, Stehr relates, the stone had turned into

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[32] Petsch, R., *Bemerkungen zu der Kunst Hermann Stehrs, op. cit.*, p. 293.
[33] Freitag, E., *op. cit.*, pp. 307 f.
[34] *Hermann Stehr. Sein Werk im Zusammenhange des religiösen Bewusstseins der Gegenwart.* Frankfurt, 1932.

bread: "Der Erwachte rief alle seine Kinder herbei, und nachdem alle von dem Brote gegessen hatten, fühlten sie sich so voller Lust, als wären sie im Paradiese. So ist es geblieben bis auf den heutigen Tag. Das Brot nahm kein Ende und die davon assen, bekamen goldene Herzen voll Fröhlichkeit und Güte, ihre Augen blieben reich und ruhig."[35] This is a striking parallel to the words of Christ after the feeding of the multitude: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger. . ." and "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever. . . ."[36] But probably nearer to Stehr than the words of Christ was the personal experience of the Holy Communion, the receiving of life everlasting through the Bread-Flesh. Stehr's strict religious education in the Catholic faith is a fact too often overlooked and may well have left much in the man that was ineradicable.[37]

The story of *Anton Gudnatz* has been compared to a passion-play,[38] though a comparison with a medieval morality play seems more inviting. It portrays the stages of transformation the profiteer, Gudnatz, undergoes on his road to a new awakening of responsibility and service to others. He is first stirred by the awakening of his conscience, which is represented by the sobbing child, begging for bread. However, he interprets this as a warning to abandon his nefarious business. He tries to justify his wrong-doing by his effort to dissociate himself from the German people (when he talks Czech). Dismayed at the failure of several enterprises and fearing apprehension by the authorities he gives up profiteering, but wants to flee with what money he has made. He helps an old woman in the railroad station and experiences a strange joy at her grateful look. Here the divine force takes over. Gudnatz is profoundly shaken by the suicide of a starving old woman. He realizes the terrible suffering of others and stops his flight. The spirit of his father appears to him, and in the church before the statue of St. Arnestus, he decides to remain in his fatherland. He gives food and money to a hungry little girl and derives a deep joy from this helpful act. He sends money to the authorities of the province for the feeding and clothing of poor children and he himself disappears into the multitude of nameless

[35] *Mythen und Mären,* p. 91.
[36] *John VI,* 35 and 51.
[37] Stehr's relation to the Catholic faith is a problem in itself, but his words to Kaergel on prayer indicate his position in general: "Es ist das Merkwürdige, ich bete das Vaterunser fast jeden Abend. Aber was ich in dieses Vaterunser hineinlege, ist jedesmal etwas anderes als darin steht," *op. cit.,* p. 167.
[38] Hofacker, E. *Hermann Stehrs Gudnatz;* Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht, März 1941.

heroes who quietly and selflessly work for the salvation of their country.

Three points are of principal interest here in respect to the nature of Stehr's concept of love. First is the stamp of the Christian influence as reflected in the importance of the conscience. Stehr opens his story with the statement that "die moralischen Götter noch manchmal regieren selbst wider den Willen des also Betroffenen."[39] Gudnatz' actions seem to be in constant opposition to this force, but they finally yield to it, and then find their motivation in it. The elements of the morality play tend also to accentuate this influence. Secondly, as in *Wendelin Heinelt,* the altruistic activity is born of a heart already in harmony with the Divine. It is the product and effect of this harmony and not the cause. Gudnatz' discovery of his fatherland (Germany) and his remaining among its people is symbolically the expression of the finding of the real fatherland, the soul, as indicated by Freitag.[40] And lastly, there is the fact that this love does not evaporate into theory nor dissolve into Utopian dreams, but is actually practiced in the immediate sphere of the individual's country. This is by no means chauvinism; it is the expression of Stehr's love for his country and his conviction that the individual must be remade before society, and the nation before the world.[41]

It has already been mentioned in the chapter on friendship that a close bond exists between Sintlinger and Faber. This is a brotherhood of spirit, as Faber says: "Du bist mein Bruder, Sintlinger . . . Am meisten, tiefer noch, ist es mir durch deine Aufzeichnungen gewiss geworden, dass du mein Bruder bist in dem heiligen Geist, der beginnt, nun in den Menschen zur Herrschaft zu gelangen, ohne Verhüllung von Dogmen, ohne Gleichnis, nachdem er vermummt all die Jahrtausende leitend in ihnen umgegangen ist. Noch einmal sei es gesagt: Du bist tiefer mein Bruder wie je ein anderer Mensch auf Erden."[42] Stehr was primarily interested in showing Sintlinger's struggle to achieve the relation with God, whereas in the same novel, he presents Faber as already having attained it and now practicing a helpful love towards his fellow-man. The one is the complement of the other. What interests us here, however, about Sintlinger is his false attitude towards his fellow-man. He is warned by Faber: "es könne nicht fehlen, dass es ihn (Sintlinger) am Ende in einer furchtbaren Mühle wirbeln werde, weil er überall, wohin ihn das Sinnen führe, sich immer selbst mitnehme, sogar

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[39] *Das Abendrot,* p. 261.
[40] *Hermann Stehr, op. cit.,* p. 285.
[41] Cf. chapter on nation.
[42] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 548.

zu seinem Gott hinein."[43] And when Sintlinger loses his daughter he finds himself in just such a predicament. He knows full well the reason, even though he has been struggling against it, for the words of Faber come irrepressibly to his mind: "Weil du dein Denken denkst und dein Fühlen fühlst, und weil dir deswegen die Liebe fehlt, die sich hingibt, ohne zu wägen und zu fragen."[44] In all his activity he is unable to get away from himself. His kindness to the old and the burdened is at first a means of finding consolation in the suffering of others; later, he comes to see in their misery and misfortune his own fate, were it not for his inherited station. He gives up his plans of aiding the poor folk of the community by the introduction of electric power and a highway because he becomes too involved in his own problems. When Faber congratulates him on checking a revolt and attributes the action to a love for his fellow-man, Sintlinger angrily denies this as well as the very possibility of a love between men. He holds himself aloof from the suit against the folk of Querhoven and refuses to acknowledge their gratitude, even though he realizes his share in their religious revival. Only after the death of his daughter and through the influence of Faber does he enter into complete happiness, at one with God and attached to his fellow-man in active and selfless love.[45]

Faber, on the other hand, devotes his life to serving others. He overcomes the bonds of family and does not even concern himself with earning a livelihood. He appears mysteriously to check violence and revolt, and exhorts the milling mob to mine the wealth and power that each carries within himself. He leads "unaufhaltsam gleich einem geborenen Heerführer und träumerisch entrückt wie ein Gottesstreiter der Rechtlosen,"[46] but he belongs to no party and knows no selfish ambition. He shields the poor and old, and suffers persecution and imprisonment in their behalf. His love is not tolerance and sympathy, for these are passive in nature; it is dynamic, victorious living. "O ja" sagte er strahlend, "das Leben ist schön! Wie herrlich ist in Wahrheit alles Schwere, wenn wir Menschen es in der rechten Weise empfangen und überwinden."[47] Faber's words are jubilant and his face, unlike that of the ascetic or the sorrowful Christ, is radiant with the joy of living: "Auf der Fahne, die ich entfalte, ist kein Tier gemalt und kein Leich-

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[43] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 378.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 554.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 138.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 551.

nam, sondern das Bild eines glückvollen, lebendigen Menschen."[48] It is also important to note that Stehr does not portray Faber's end, but on the contrary gives us a final view of him setting out again to carry his gospel in word and deed to his fellow-man.

The gospel that Faber comes to proclaim lays emphasis, first on the new relationship between man and God,[49] and then on the new humanity. The two are inseparable, however, as Faber writes to Sintlinger: "Die unbegrenzte Liebe der Menschen zueinander ist die einzige Offenbarung des Gottes in uns und des Weltgottes, die ein und dasselbe sind."[50] The similarity to the two commandments of Christian love; "thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and "thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is unmistakable. A comparison of the two would require a separate study in itself. However, in respect to the love for the neighbor, a few remarks will have to suffice here. The concept of love among men is a part of every great religion, but only in Christianity does it play so important a role and is it so dynamic a force. In both Chinese thought (with particular reference to Laotse) and Hindu thought (with particular reference to Gautama Buddha) both acknowledged to have influenced Stehr in large measure, this love appears as a gentle compassion, in a word, as a more passive force. Faber's words and deeds are certainly not passive.

Not only in Faber, Gudnatz, and Sintlinger does Stehr give body and substance to his lofty concept of love, but also in Wendelin Heinelt, who emerges from the shroud of symbolism and mysticism which cloaks him, as a living figure of human proportions and universal significance: "Auch du hast dann und wann schon einen aus seiner Familie gesehen. Wenn du jemand um einen Trunk Wasser bittest und er reicht dir die Kanne, um einen Bissen und er langt dir das Brot hin, um ein Eckchen für dein Haupt und er bietet dir sein Haus an, so wisse, es ist ein Kind jenes Heinelt Wendelin, der voll Schmerz sein Glück suchen ging, und als er es gefunden hatte, dessen nicht achtete, um seinem ärmeren Bruder zu helfen.

Einmal aber sind wir alle Heinelt-Menschen geworden. Dann ist der Himmel auf Erden, und niemand fürchtet sich mehr vor dem Tode."[51]

In conclusion, the attempt can now be made to formulate Stehr's concept of love among men. This love must be an emanation of a heart

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[48] *Ibid.*, p. 552.
[49] Cf. chapter on God.
[50] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 372.
[51] *Mythen und Mären*, p. 92.

already in harmony with the Divine; it is altogether selfless; it is dynamic in action, affirmative to life and jubilant in expression; it is intrinsically original, though influenced in part by the Christian concept; it embraces all mankind and although acknowledging national limitations in the scope of its immediate efficacy, it points towards the realization of the new humanity on earth among all men. This love, as exemplified in the life of Faber, is "die höchste und freieste Form des Daseins."[52]

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[52] *Das Stundenglas, op. cit.,* p. 276.

5. Material World

As was mentioned in the beginning of this study in connection with the discussion of the method of procedure to be adopted, the term "world" was chosen as best suited to designate material possessions in general. Foremost among these in Stehr's work is money and wealth, and then land; also included is the acclaim of the world, or fame.

Like his fellow-Silesian, Gerhart Hauptmann, Stehr is moved by a deep, understanding sympathy for the peasant, the poor, and the lowly. Yet, as was shown, his understanding is not onesided, for Stehr's eye is even more uncompromising in criticising the shortcomings of his small man. He sees him consumed by greed for soil or gold, which leads him to inevitable ruin. The peasant girl, Josepha, in *Der Schindelmacher,* inherited her greed, but in her this weakness became a passion, a "Geiz, der scharf wie ein Messer, spitz wie ein Dorn war."[1] It ate its way into her heart and forced out every bit of kindness and love. Josepha easily subjected her weakling husband to her will, and soon the disease crept into his heart, too. Their schemes to drive out the old shingle-maker and gain complete possession of his little farm coiled about their souls, "wie die mageren Leiber hungriger Schlangen."[2] Their cruelty finally became unendurable to the old man and he drove them out. In his rage he demolished the farm-house, and coming upon their cache of coins he roared: "Verfluchtes Geld!—dreimal verfluchtes Geld! Schenderknechte seid ihr, finklicha Hunde! Woampatiere, die de Menschablutt gloatt macht."[3] The greed of these two at last makes them homeless, literally as well as spiritually, for Stehr holds that man's true home is his divine soul.

On the other hand, this inordinate covetousness is often the symptom of extreme poverty and distress and as such it evokes Stehr's profound sympathy. He knows how grim a struggle life is for the farmers of the Silesian mountain district, and how their sweat and toil is often rewarded with disastrous rains or droughts. If there is no money to relieve the

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[1] *Der Schindelmacher; Auf Leben und Tod,* p. 240.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 241.
[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 267 f.

distress, the only alternative is hunger. Every penny is a means of staving off hunger. "Darum weint man in diesen einsamen Hütten, welche dem Himmel so nahe sind, um einen verlorenen Fünfzigpfennig wochenlang. Lässt ein Kind auf seinem Weg zum Krämer den Pfennig, für welchen es Zichorie kaufen sollte, achtlos aus seinem Händchen gleiten, dass er sich eilig zwischen den Steinen auf Nimmerwiedersehen verkriecht, so schlagen Vater und Mutter es unbarmherzig, und seine Geschwister sehen es lange scheel von der Seite an, als hafte ein schwerer Makel auf ihm."[4] Of such circumstances Stehr writes with understanding compassion, as for example in the brief episode of the lost dollar in *Der Schindelmacher.* This loss forces Josepha's father to his sick bed. Sometime after his recovery he is given a dollar for his services to a wealthy stranger. The shock of this unexpected good fortune proves too much for him and, with a happy smile upon his lips, he passes away peacefully during the night clutching the dollar-piece in his cold hand. In the old man the love for money appears as a weakness, deserving of the poet's sympathy; in his daughter it is a disease, a passion, which destroys its victim.

Not unlike this poor peasant's weakness is the case of the tailor Garbe, in *Das letzte Kind.* He is bent low under a dreadful burden of misfortune; not only poverty, but sickness and death plague his family. His only comfort is the knowledge that he still owns a paltry bit of money. His seventh child lies dying in the cradle, and his good wife is growing weaker and weaker. Yet somehow he cannot believe this is the end, for after all he is not destitute, and his few cents mean life to him. The gates of his soul are too narrow to receive the wisdom of death, which one of his departed children brings to him as an angel. It is clear to this heavenly messenger, "dass das Leben seines Vaters kein Ende haben, sondern nur einmal aufhören würde."[5] The deaths of his last child and wife upset his mental balance and the chance mention of the word "Geld" drives him mad. He is last seen lying on the floor counting and kissing his money.

Klöhn and Karl Exner are more like Josepha in their greed. Klöhn, the bank director of *Der letzte Akt,* swindles his own friend for riches, only to die in the end at the hands of his victim. Karl Exner is a clubfoot, a lonely brooding man, who dreams of wealth, of land and cattle and a great farm. He has allowed his physical deformity to misshape his inner life and his whole being to be consumed by the desire for worldly

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 238.
[5] *Das letzte Kind; Mythen und Mären,* p. 25.

possessions. This is the cause of the hostility between him and his brother; it involves him in illicit acts, in the death of his only friend, and in the terrible tragedy which overwhelms his wife. His proud spirit breaks when he is forced to flee and leave behind his cattle, house, and fields. He salvages his savings, seeks to escape across the border, but he is seized and sentenced to life imprisonment.

It is significant to note that all of the incidents so far discussed have come from Stehr's early writings, from his so-called naturalistic period. His characters have so far sought to find their happiness in the world without, and in the material possessions it has to offer. Their fate has been, in every case, tragic, for they have not come to the realization, "dass alles äussere Glück Wind und Gefahr sei, wenn es nicht aus der Verbundenheit mit dem unaussprechbar göttlichen Sinn seines tiefsten Inneren steige und in ihn zurückmünde."[6] But the humble woman of Gotschdorf, whose heart was so full of selfless concern for her children and love for her soldier-husband, knows full well which things have eternal value, and which are ephemeral. When death grants her one wish she thinks first of her husband and then of all men suffering and dying in the great war. Only after she has expressed her wish, and then for but a brief moment, does she think of wealth or possessions. "Als die Nageln über die Felder der Strasse zuschritt, kam ihr der Gedanke, dass sie den Tod ja um Reichtum und ein neues Haus hätte bitten können. Er, der alle Macht über das Leben hat, würde ihr das gewiss gewährt haben. Aber gleich darauf fiel ihr ein, dass der Tod ja nur zu Gütern führe, die hinter diesem Dasein in der Ewigkeit etwas gelten. Sie gab sich zufrieden und ging weiter."[7]

But the struggle to give up worldly possessions and to overcome the greed for them is difficult and desperate, for it is a matter of life and death. The story of Anton Gudnatz represents a transition phase from the completely self-centered love of worldly goods to the realization of the all-importance of man's own inner wealth. Gudnatz is a profiteer, a man who grows rich at the expense of his fellow-man during a period of national disaster. He carries on his underhanded business by deception, bribery, and even theft, until his fortune totals some quarter million Marks. "Zu zählen, zu überschlagen, was mit dem Gelde geschehen solle, Pläne in alle Wolken hinaufzubauen und dann, wenn er von all dem Spielen müde war, im Dunkeln zu liegen und über sich dem Tanz von bunten, goldenen und silbernen Kugeln zuzusehen, darin bestand das

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[6] *Nathanael Maechler,* p. 330.
[7] *Das Gotschdorfer Weib; Mythen und Mären,* pp. 149 f.

eigentliche Glück Anton Gudnatzens."[8] But what a different man is he, who at the end of the story tucks away in the apron of a poor little girl a hand full of bills, so happy in the act of giving that he no longer thinks of counting his money! He has overcome the fear of poverty. Joyfully he bids her tell her mother: ". . . der Herrgott zu Glatz lässt sie grüssen und der Mann, der sein Vaterland gefunden hat."[9] This is to be understood as the real "Vaterland," the realm of the soul and God, in contrast to the "Mutterland" in Bohemia, towards which Gudnatz first travels, and which stands for his personal happiness and comfort.[10] The transformation of this profiteer into a "person" is the artistic expression of Stehr's message, the challenge to overcome the "empirisches Ich" and to unfold the "wahres Ich." It has already been shown in the previous chapter how many are the obstacles and how difficult is the way.

Stehr's so-called "Künstlernovellen" are of chief interest for this study in the consideration of the concept of love in respect to woman and art, but they also present material of importance for discussion here. The Geigenmacher, Meister Cajetan, and Pankratius Schiedeck of *Der Himmelschlüssel,* have discovered the fullness that lies within man. They are not lured by money or fame. The violin-maker, for instance, visited many royal courts with great honor, but retired to a humble cabin in the woods to build his finest violins. And when the distinguished audience, which had listened to the first concert on his new violin, arose and turned to hail him with just acclaim, he was nowhere to be found. He had quietly taken his leave to set out in search of his beloved Schönlein, his inspiration. Meister Cajetan is just as modest and unassuming. One of his violins is praised highly by the virtuoso, Spohr; it is sold for a fabulous sum and carries Cajetan's fame over Europe, but the little master remains in his humble shop and continues to create his masterpieces for his Marianne, completely unmindful of his spreading fame. On the other hand, there is Thaddäus Frenzel of *Der Feuersamen.* He sets out to gain fame and fortune, but having won them, finds only misfortune and tragedy.

The little tale of the *Himmelschlüssel* presents two characters and two attitudes, Frau Schiedeck, the materialist, and her husband Pankratius, the idealist. She always wanted him to carve practical, salable things, for she thought, "das Glück des Lebens sei nichts als ein Ofen,

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[8] *Gudnatz; Das Abendrot,* p. 262.
[9] *Ibid.,* p. 376.
[10] Cf. Freitag, *op. cit.,* p. 285.

der mit Geld geheizt wird."[11] Pankratius, however, remained poor. His beautifully carved saints stood in the chapels and churches all around, and whenever artists and church-men came to him from distant cities, he always gave his enthusiastic visitors his works of art joyfully and for very little money. Frau Schiedeck clings to the earth and her eyes cannot look beyond; Pankratius creates a living statue and leaves the empirical world behind.

The problem of the two Maechler-novels has been considered in the previous chapter, but the position of Nathanael and Jochen to worldly possessions and acclaim deserves mention here too. Nathanael, it will be remembered, worked untiringly and unselfishly for the welfare and prosperity of his fellow-townsmen, yet he failed to win the grace he sought. Jochen, on the other hand, understands his father's failure and realizes that worldly service to others, even though it be an expression of the loftiest altruism, avails nothing. But he himself becomes involved in the struggle to maintain his own comfortable life. He frets and worries over the cost of his father's burial. He enjoys a secret pleasure in counting the coins he has carefully stored away, but the clatter of the coins he loves so much drowns out the divine music within him.

The two streams of thought which have influenced Stehr in general show themselves in two different, though not essentially opposite attitudes towards worldly possessions. The eastern influence can be seen in Faber's renunciation of all material wealth; he gives up his position and roams in anonymity from one section of the country to another, exhorting the people to inner regeneration. Andreas Sintlinger, on the other hand, is more the man of the occident; he works his farm diligently and well and under his guidance it flourishes, but he strives always towards inner wealth and happiness. On one occasion he dismisses a helper who worked too feverishly. "Denn, sagte er, die Lasterhaftigkeit des übertriebenen Fleisses sei um so gefährlicher, weil sie allgemein für hohe Tugend gehalten wird. Die rechte Arbeit sei wohl ein guter Weg in den Himmel. Doch nur der Gelassene findet ihn, jener, der zwar jeden Tag ein Stück hinter dem Raser zurückbleibt, am Ende des Lebens aber tausendmal weiter gekommen ist als er. Und der Käfer, der immer eine grosse Kotkugel hinter sich herdrehe, sei darum nicht vornehmer als einer, der das nicht tue. Der Reichtum der Menschen aber gelte vor unserm wirklichen Glück nicht mehr wie so eine Dreckpille."[12] Both

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[11] *Der Himmelschlüssel*, p. 11.
[12] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 290.

Sintlinger and Faber, in their own way, have attained the goal which Stehr once recommended to a little friend of his on the day of her confirmation:

> Nimm wenig von der Welt
> und gib dem Leben viel.[13]

[13] *Am Konfirmationstag; Lebensbuch,* p. 136.

6. Nation

Heinz Kindermann has characterized Stehr's life-work as a "Märchen vom deutschen Herzen."[1] He was referring to the little mythical tale which bears that name. This is a story of the Eternal Father's love and grace. In the beginning, Stehr relates, He endowed man with reason, so that he would not be swayed entirely by the body, but before long, misunderstanding and strife began to plague mankind. Of the millions and millions only a few were left and these finally sank exhausted to the ground. The Eternal Father looked upon them with compassion and from the heavenly light He plucked a radiant spark and laid it in the heart of each man. Upon the last of them all, however, upon the one who opened his eyes expectantly and eagerly and whose body was strained in readiness, He smiled: "Du lieber deutscher Mann," sagte er in die erwartungsvollen Blauaugen hinein, "so will ich dir die doppelte Herzensflamme geben, damit du vom Himmel her allen dienst und dadurch, dich überwindend, alle überwindest."[2] Through the centuries the Eternal Father watched his blond favorite and He saw, "wie in seinem Schatten Reiche wuchsen und vergingen, wie er angefallen, zu Boden geschlagen, blutig über die Erde geschleift und entrechtet wurde, wie ihn aber sein doppelt göttliches Herz und sein untötbarer Geist immer wieder in seiner ewigen Würde neu schufen, wie sein Gesang durch die ganze Welt drang und wie aus seiner Brust die Sterne des Himmels kreisten und der Sinn der Erde strömte."[3] Those winged words of devotion and love to his native land were written by Stehr in Germany's dark hour, when the despair which followed the surrender and inflation was infesting the minds and hearts of his country-men. But there is no bitterness and no despair in the pages of this story; no vain-glorious boast of past greatness, nor promise of new glory for the German state. Stehr's inspiration was his confidence in the inexhaustible strength and beauty of the German

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 396.
[2] *Mythen und Mären*, p. 131.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

spirit, as he saw it. He believes all men to be blessed by the Divine, but calls the German "den doppelt Gesegneten."

It is his conviction that German art, in the broadest sense, reveals the final truths, restores the German to his eternal dignity, and carries his fame throughout the world.

One year after the war Stehr raised his voice for a new Germany, as he had many times before, but now even more challengingly. This was not to be a political uprising, but a spiritual rebirth in the heart of every German. The suffering and the guilt of all was not a punishment, but a clear sign of the vanity and futility of all external power and force:

> Fangt in euch mit dem Paradiese an,
> dann ist's auch auf der Erde aufgetan.[4]

Stehr stands above all parties and factions. He addresses himself to the German people, reminds them of their fathers, brothers, and sons who died for the old Germany, and calls upon their personal responsibility to create the new Germany from within: "Sie starben für die Freiheit, so seid frei von jeder Niedertracht des Geistes und Herzens; sie fielen für die Macht, wohlan, werdet mächtig im guten reinen Willen; erhebt Euch endlich zu menschlicher Grösse. Wartet nicht immer auf den Staat. Ihr selbst seid der Staat. Ihr seid seine Ursache, er ist nur Eure Wirkung. Und reicht er Euch Galläpfel, so wisset Ihr daraus, dass Ihr keine Feigenbäume seid."[5] Here Stehr clearly makes the distinction between nation and state. The former is the aggregate of persons, it is the people themselves, the German people; whereas the state is but the expression, the servant of the people: the state changes, the nation remains the same.

Stehr is not a political writer. He has, to be sure, incorporated in his novels and poems criticisms of the monarchy and the republic, but only in the conviction that "the state, in fostering the rise of 'civilization,' is drawing man further and further away from his inner self, and is placing exterior distractions and obstacles in the way of his struggle to his soul, wherein alone he may reach the fulfillment of his destiny."[6] Stehr faced this problem of state-nation, political-national feeling with Nathanael Maechler: "Aber nie unterlag er den Verlock-

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[4] *An Spartakus; Lebensbuch*, p. 282.
[5] *Faustgedanken, op. cit.*, p. 145.
[6] Mueller, V., *op. cit.*, p. 201.

ungen zu einer uferlosen Demagogie, der sich sogar Staatsmänner von Rang zur Durchsetzung ihrer Idee bei der Masse oft bedienen müssen und nicht davor zurückschrecken dürfen, durch die Schein- und Trugmünzen der Phrasen das allgemeine Interesse für sich zu gewinnen. Von seinem festen Prinzip, dass der Staat nur der Diener, nicht der unumschränkte Herr des Bürgers sei, brachte ihn nichts ab, . . ."[7]

It will suffice here to indicate Stehr's attitude towards the problem of the state as shown in the dissertation of Victoria Mueller. This author traces the poet's "evolution from antagonism and rejection to concurrence and acceptance,"[8] and finds in conclusion that "there is a sense of the necessity for a fusion of man and the State and a resultant realization of the need for man's responsibility to the State."[9]

Unlike some of his younger contemporaries Stehr's new humanity is not political, as Maechler's career clearly indicates. It does not call for an upheaval in the social order, the futility of which is exemplified in Professor Weitfeld;[10] nor is it international in its aspect. The transformation of Gudnatz, for instance, is prepared not only by a profound compassion for his fellow-man, but also by a love for his native land. The pitiful voice of the starving little girl and the desperate suicide of the old woman awakened the heart of the selfish profiteer, but he was still determined to flee with his money from Germany. When he arrived in Glatz, however, and sought to inquire about the train for Bohemia, the words were choked in his throat. The spirit of his father appeared to him then, and the bonds of his fatherland tightened about his heart. With remarkable skill Stehr portrays the awakening of Gudnatz' feeling for his homeland: first, the landscape through which he was passing recalled to him his walks there with his father, then his father's spirit reproached him for his cowardly flight and reminded him of his love for his fatherland, and finally the statue of the bishop in the town-church recalled to his mind his father's story about this man, who fled Bohemia to die in Germany. And so Gudnatz remained in Germany and gave away all he had to feed the hungry and alleviate the suffering of the poor. The themes of his compassion for suffering humanity and love for his fatherland are inextricably interwoven. "Von Anton Gudnatz hörte die Welt nichts mehr. Er ist in die unabsehbare Schar der Namenlosen untergetaucht, die weder toben noch klagen, sondern ruhig

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[7] *Nathanael Maechler,* pp. 254 f.
[8] *Op. cit.,* pp. 193 f.
[9] P. 196.
[10] *Die Krähen; Das Abendrot,* pp. 256 f. Cf. also the chapter on mankind.

und mit ehrlichen Händen arbeiten, weil sie wissen, dass Deutschland weder im Himmel noch auf Erden verloren sein kann."[11]

It was not mere chance that Gudnatz experienced the first awakening of deep love for his native-land in the Grafschaft Glatz, for this is Stehr's own home. Here he was born, in the little town of Habelschwerdt. Here as a child he felt its spell come over him, from the old towers, the quiet streets and the sunny squares, from its long history, and from the surrounding mountains and forests. Stehr always cherished the deepest affection for this town. He wove its streets and towers into his early novel *Drei Nächte,* and dedicated to it his last published work. The devotion seems to have been mutual, for Habelschwerdt, in honor to its famous son, named the old tower which he had immortalized, der Willmannsturm.

"Deutschland ist mein Vaterland," Stehr said in 1932 at the placing of a tablet on the house of his birth, "die Grafschaft meine eigentliche wahre Heimat; meiner Vaterstadt gehört eine Liebe, für die ich nichts kann, weil sie die Blutforderung meines Wesens ist, solange ich ahnend lebe."[12]

Whenever the poet felt his thoughts being worn away in never ceasing intellectual activity, or his inspiration fading, whenever he became tired of himself he knew then that he must return to his home. "Hier, in der Heimat, wo alle Wirklichkeit ein Wunder und alle Wunder greifbare Wirklichkeit waren, werde ich von aller Reflexion erlöst, von aller Geschichte, dem Parlament, den Kirchen, dem Kampf und Ringen meiner Lebensaufgabe und allem Streit der Systeme und Meinungen. Ich vergewaltige Erde und Himmel nicht mehr mit meinen Gedanken und verstehe jenseits und über meinen Verstand hinaus den himmlischen Sinn von Wald, Wiese, Fluss, Blume, Tier, Wasser und Mensch. Indem ich über mich hinausgehoben werde, werde ich meiner recht inne."[13] Here Stehr shows another way over worldly things and human distractions to peace and fullness within. It is clear, too, that the attachment and devotion to the home-land is inseparably bound with a feeling for nature, this however, belongs to a later chapter.

Stehr is keenly conscious of the Silesian tradition which finds expression in his works. He is proud of it, and cherishes it and fosters it. He feels himself closely bound to everything Silesian, to its soil, to its culture, its history, and its tradition. The three essays, *Die Heimat, Die*

[11] *Auf Leben und Tod,* p. 377.
[12] Schlesische Monatshefte, 16 J. Febr., 1939, p. 44.
[13] *Die Heimat; Das Stundenglas,* p. 174.

Grafschaft und die Grafschafter, and *Der Schlesier,* are the product of his study and the expression of his affection. The last named is noteworthy for its penetrating observations and subtle comprehension of Silesian history, topography, art, and culture, and its revelation of the "Silesian soul." The post-war annexation of Upper Silesia by Poland evoked an impassioned plea from Stehr for the return of this patch of German soil.[14] All his life was spent in the province of Silesia, from Habelschwerdt, to Pohldorf, Dittersbach and Warmbrunn, and finally to Ober-Schreiberhau. Yet this very landscape which bounded him did not cramp his spirit nor make his world provincial, for the mountains which checked his view around him, turned his eyes upwards, towards God. Stehr's style is Silesian, and his characters, for the most part farmers and artisans, sprung from its soil. The scene of his works, with but few exceptions, is Silesia; the names of his characters are frequently taken from Silesian stock, and many of his stories are flavored with the provincial dialect. But above these more or less superficial characteristics is the fact that in Stehr the Silesian tradition has found fullest realization.[15]

Times of great national crisis and impending disaster always spur the poet to new song. Stehr raised his voice in protest against the chicanery and chauvinism of the monarchy which was replacing "die selbstverständliche Vaterlandsliebe" with "lärmendem Patriotismus,"[16] and one year before the war he felt alone in his devotion to his Fatherland:

> Heut ist nur der ein guter Bürger,
> der stets mit voller Lunge schreit . . .
> Ja, lasst mich meine Träume haben,
> dies hohle Pathos macht mir Pein.[17]

Stehr faced the war at the age of fifty and saw his son die for his country. His war poems are few: *Der Krieg bricht los, An Deutschlands Volk und Heer, Die Mütter und der Dichter* (1914); *Meinem Sohn Willy, als er ins Feld zog, Prolog, An Gabriele D'Annunzio, Totenlieder, Die Masurenschlacht* (1915); *Winterlied an das Vaterland, Mutter und Tochter* (1916); *Trost im Weltkriege* (1917); *Vor dem Ende des Weltkrieges, Frühlingslied im Kriege,* and *Kriegsende* (1918).

[14] *Um Oberschlesien.* Köhler, W., *op. cit.,* pp. 97-106.
[15] Cf. Stehr, *Der Schlesier;* and Milch, W., *op. cit.,* pp. 21 ff.
[16] *Drei Nächte,* p. 129.
[17] *Lied des Einsamen; Lebensbuch,* p. 167.

When his son departed for the field of battle he gave him a copy of *Drei Nächte* and advised him to learn from his father's struggle:

> Das Höchste ist noch zu erreichen.
> Dich trägt des Volkes heil'ge Flut,
> es prägen dich die Feuerzeichen
> zum deutschen Manne gross und gut.[18]

Stehr must have thought of his son's death when he spoke to Kaergel many years later of the hero's final happy moments as he passes into anonymity—perhaps his insight even came to him from the son's experience: "Der Held, der aus dem Schützengraben aufspringt und im rasenden Maschinengewehrfeuer vorwärts jagt, weiss in diesen Minuten oder Sekunden nichts von sich selber. Wenn er taumelnd ans Ziel sinkt, kann er dir nicht sagen, was in diesen Sekunden in ihm vorging. Er war nur unbeschreiblich glücklich, weil er weit über allem Menschlichen war."[19] Like the poet, the lover, the child and the saint, the hero can experience these moments of anonymity in God, inspired to his heroic action by a deep devotion to his native land.

Stehr gave his country two other works during the dark years of the War, *Das Gotschdorfer Weib* and *Der Heiligenhof*. With the former, the poet offered consolation and hope to his countrymen, and with the latter a new gospel, a new life of everlasting peace and happiness.

Stehr remained true throughout his life to his lofty principle of individual responsibility. His life-work is addressed to the German nation. In a speech written in 1922 he called on every individual to free himself of all baseness of spirit and to grow strong in good will: "Jeder einzelne Deutsche ruhe nicht eher, bis er ein Held dieser sittlichen Ideen geworden ist, von denen ich eben gesprochen habe. Dann erst besitzt er die wahre deutsche, die einzig wahre Menschengesinnung; dann erst ist das neue Deutschland geboren."[20] In 1933 he exhorted German youth to be mindful of its individual responsibility: "Wenn Ihr Euren neuen nationalen Lebensglauben nicht in dem tiefsten Grunde Eures Wesens, in seinem unzeitlichen göttlichen Grunde, der Seele, verankert, so bleibt die Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, auf deren Fahnen Ihr schwört, doch nur ein Massentrieb, der leicht bei einer geschichtlichen Schicksalswende zur Massenflucht werden kann."[21] At seventy

[18] *Meinem Sohn Willy, als er ins Feld zog; Lebensbuch,* p. 206.
[19] Kaergel, *op. cit.,* p. 157.
[20] *Faustgedanken, op. cit.,* p. 145.
[21] *An die deutsche Jugend; Das Stundenglas,* pp. 116 f.

years of age Stehr published a short autobiographical sketch of his life and his struggle to find inner peace and happiness. He concluded it with the conviction, often repeated before, that above all the leadership of art "dem Weg des deutschen Menschen einen Tiefen—und Höhensinn gibt," and "dass das Deutsche Reich dunkel würde, wenn man diese Menschen (die Dichter) aus ihm nähme, für die nichts erreichbarer ist als das Unendliche."[22]

Stehr always considered his work as service to his country. On one occasion, when he received birthday greetings from a friend, he wrote that the words of appreciation "mir die freudige Möglichkeit näher gebracht, dass mein Werk meinem Volke doch noch jenen Segen tiefer Freiheit und Sicherheit bringen kann, die es mir selbst beschert hat, indem ich darnach rang und es vollendete."[23]

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[22] *Mein Leben,* pp. 39 f.
[23] Dated March 7, 1922; Schlesische Monatshefte, Febr. 1939, p. 59.

7. Art

In the main, there are two general attitudes towards art represented in German literature around the turn of the century. In theory, the movement of Naturalism considered art, one might almost say, as a mechanical function; in the works of Naturalism art and the artist find little place. Impressionism and Neo-Romanticism, on the other hand, were very much interested in the artist and his problems; in these movements the scientific interpretation of life was replaced by the aesthetic. Stehr belonged to neither group. Art and the artist find very little place in his work, but the attitude when present, is neither scientific nor purely aesthetic.

It is clear from the title of Stehr's first volume that his devotion to his creative activity is not merely a matter of love, but a matter of "life and death." The sincerity and earnestness of the man Stehr is unmistakably etched in the strong features of his face, in the firm, pointed jaw, the determined set of the lips, and in the expression of his eyes, "das tiefe Staunen über einen nicht zu enträtselnden Traum."[1] In the intensely autobiographical *Lebensbuch* and the brief sketch, *Mein Leben,* he has revealed the relation of his work to his life. Stehr's formative years were spent in almost complete loneliness, in extremely humble circumstances, buffeted by many misfortunes and hardships. Within, the young man was wracked with terrible doubts and futile longings:

> Beschattet lag mein Sein, in Not verklungen
> schien alle Süsse, meine Welt verwüstet,
>
> Last meine Arbeit, eine Geissel Hoffen:
> So sass ich starr vor mitternächt'gem Lichte,
> und wie ein Abgrund stand das Weltall offen.
>
> Da hatt' ich andern Trost nicht als Gesichte
> und Klänge, die von herber Sehnsucht troffen.
> So und nicht anders sang ich mir Gedichte.[2]

[1] *Der Schatten; Mythen und Mären,* p. 184.
[2] *Abwehr: Lebensbuch,* pp. 19 f.

Through his creative talent he sought to free himself from the bonds of his position, made almost unendurable by the hostility of his colleagues and the severity of his superiors. He turned from poetry to express in the medium of the short-story the deeper meaning of life:

> "Ich plage meine Seele und lass sie nimmer ruh'n,
> was dieses soll bedeuten, dies rätselvolle Tun.[3]

He felt as though driven by a demon:

> Der Geist peitscht mich, durchs Werk zu sich zu kommen, . . .[4]

Distress and distrust and opposition did not weaken his high resolve nor shake his faith in his mission. He did not come to paint colors and weave subtle harmonies, nor to lift the banner of political and social revolution, but to remake the world through spiritual regeneration. Throughout his whole life he remained true to his mission.

As a result of constant self-searching in his work Stehr was able to come to his true self and find lasting peace and happiness. He sought by his example to show the way to others and particularly to his fellow Germans. Not unlike Schiller, he entrusts to art the guidance of the nation. Speaking of leadership, Stehr said in 1934: "Ich meine die Volksführung durch die Kunst im weitesten, der Dichtung im engeren Sinne. Ueber jedem grossen Strom glänzt die Bahn seines Weges in der Höhe ein zweitesmal wieder wie eine schimmernde himmlische Luftspiegelung, und tiefstem intuitivem Versinken ist es nicht ganz sicher, ob der Strom drunten Zauberwirkung dieser göttlichen Kräfte in der Höhe ist oder umgekehrt, wie es nicht sicher ist, ob der Himmel eine Wirkung der Erde ist oder umgekehrt. So geheimnisvoll göttlich und rätselhaft ist die Führung des Menschen und der Völker durch die Kunst, also auch vor allem durch die Dichtung."[5]

There is no subtle or refined discussion of the arts in Stehr's works, in fact only music receives more than passing mention. In *Der Geigenmacher,* several sonatas of Beethoven and Mozart, and the Chaconne of Bach are played; in *Meister Cajetan* the baron requests on one occasion the F major Andante of Mozart, the great violinist Spohr plays his own concerto; Cajetan attends concerts regularly and plays Beethoven and

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[3] *Späte Verirrung; ibid.,* p. 100.
[4] *Rückfall, ibid.,* p. 150.
[5] *Mein Leben,* p. 39.

Chopin himself, through which episodes Stehr's own appreciation and understanding of music find expression. There is also much untrained and unpretentious singing and music-making in his works. The spontaneous song of the child predominates; recall for example, Amadeus Mandel, Helene Sintlinger, and Damian Maechler. The musical instruments played are simple, and common to the people. One need but remember the festival of Saint Cecilia in *Der begrabene Gott,* the single incident of a celebration with song and dance in the early works. As the dancers become more and more vigorous the musicians play with ever-increasing gusto: "Der Bass knurrt, das Horn hustet heiser und unregelmässig, die Klarinette gellt schrill wie jemand, dem ein Gewächs aus dem Leibe geschnitten wird, und wetteifert mit der Violine, die ein schmerzvolles Wimmern von sich gibt. Dazu wirbelt die Trommel als schütte jemand zur Feier des Tages Lesesteine in ein Holzschaff. Die Melitten betreiben mit äusserster Anstrengung ihre Kunst. Der Wirt blickt bewundernd zu ihnen hin."[6] Besides these everyday instruments there is also the accordion of Gottlieb Meixner, the hurdy-gurdy and guitar of the Schwerdtner-woman, the flute of Peter Brindeisener, and the Blechpfeife of the Glasegrunder Amtmann in *Der Himmelschlüssel.* There is a strong *volkstümliches* element in this predilection for the human voice and the simple musical instruments.

A necessary complement to the consideration of a writer's attitude towards art is the study of the artist as he appears in the writer's work. Only two artists appear in Stehr's works, the violinists Spohr and Wieniawski; the latter receives but passing mention and the former is drawn into the story of *Meister Cajetan* only with the intention of so anchoring the events in reality. There are but two dilettantes; the enthusiastic count, friend and patron of the violin-maker, and the Baron von Uhlen, the art-collector and friend of Meister Cajetan.

Stehr's Künstlernovellen, *Der Geigenmacher, Meister Cajetan,* and *Der Himmelschlüssel,* present another interesting point in this respect. The protagonists of these stories are not "artists" in the usual sense of the word, but artisans. They work with their hands, and fashion their violins or figures directly from the raw material. And in every case this is wood. Furthermore there is no high degree of technical mastery displayed by Stehr's artists. Of Meister Cajetan, for example, he says: "Er war beileibe kein guter Virtuos, kannte sogar keine Note, war aber voll

[6] P. 42.

innerer ungeborener Musik."[7] He plays spontaneously, in the spirit of improvisation.

These men are artisans also because their art is not intellectual, but a true outpouring of nature, symbolized by wood. Not unusual or difficult to understand, if one keeps in mind Stehr's very close relationship to nature.[8] All this is most evident in *Der Himmelschlüssel,* where Pankratius Schiedeck is strangely led across the meadow to the edge of the forest. Here he catches sight of an old stump, half in the earth and half out of it, and seeing in the stump the similarity to his own position, he sits down on it in meditation. But he is not able to remain still, and the strange feeling comes over him that it is alive and trying to unseat him purposely. "Als dem verdutzten Pankratius das einigemal passiert war, stieg in ihm die schreckhaftselige Ahnung auf, dass in dem Holz dieses Stockes, der ihn durchaus nicht sitzen liess, von Anfang an jene geheimnisvolle Figur vorhanden sei, nach der er schon so lange Jahre, Tag und Nacht, werkend und sinnend rang, jene Figur nämlich, in und an der aller Stoff so ins Wesenslebendige verwandelt sei, dass ihr auch nicht mit dem kleinsten Fäserchen das werkhaft Gemachte, also immerhin Tote, anhafte, sondern alles, aber auch alles aus der urewigen Schöpferkraft stamme, von der jedes Lebendige im Himmel und auf Erden herrührte."[9] Stehr considers art as something "Urnatürliches," not "das werkhaft Gemachte, also immerhin Tote"; its source, "die urewige Schöpferkraft" is divine.

It is to be remembered that when Stehr speaks of art he most often has music in mind. This predilection for music can be understood in part from his belief that of all the arts music is most directly sprung from the divine source; it is most "natural" and most "alive."[10] In *Das Stundenglas* he writes: "Jedes Kunstwerk muss den *Rhythmus* (italics mine) des Naturgeschehens besitzen, denn nur dadurch allein erzeugt sich eine Empfindung der Realität des Naturgeschehens trotz Stilisierung."[11] Meister Cajetan captures this "rhythm" most strikingly. One day as he plays a Beethoven sonata alone by his favorite pool in the forest, the piano accompaniment begins to sing in the depths of his own inmost being. Then the melody seems to rise around about him from

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[7] P. 21.
[8] *Mich haben Wald und Einsamkeit erzogen; Der Mittelgarten,* pp. 121 ff. Cf. also chapter on nature.
[9] Pp. 20 f.
[10] Cf. *Die Geschichte vom Rauschen.*
[11] P. 323.

the rustling of the trees and the bushes and the hum of the evening air. The wonderful harmony of music and nature becomes a reality here. "So ging dieses mit-und gegeneinanderströmende Zwiesingen weiter. Doch wie es im Menschenleben geschieht, dass alles Ringen und Kämpfen sich an sich selber erschöpft und zuletzt nur jener Traum übrigbleibt, dessen himmlische Einfachheit uns nicht in den irdischen Weltstreit führt, so läutert sich in allen Kunstwerken, diesen zeitlosen Symbolen des Daseins, durch die vielfältigsten Figurationen endlich die Melodie zu einer so selig einfachen Traumform, dass sie von den Schlacken aller Widerhelligkeit befreit, in die ewige Harmonie des Alls und unserer Seele zurückfliesst."[12] The thought that man's life (i.e., his soul) finds through art a most direct relation to nature and God is also expressed in *Der Geigenmacher* and *Der Himmelschlüssel.* Its poetic formulation is: "Der Mensch ist die Wundergeige, auf der Gott selber spielt."[13]

The same determination and earnestness that was observed in Stehr's devotion to his work is also characteristic of his artists. There is a predominant Faustian quality to their striving. The opening lines of *Der Geigenmacher* bring this immediately to the fore: "Ein Mann strebte von Kindheit auf, weil es ihm schon im Leib der Mutter der Gesang der Vögel und das Lied der Sterne in hellen Mitternächten angetan hatte, danach, die tiefsten Klänge von Erde und Himmel zu erlauschen und so einzufangen, dass sie nicht mehr entwischen könnten, sondern hervortreten müssten, wann es ihn gelüstete, sie zu hören."[14] Meister Cajetan is a gentler, milder character, but his devotion to his craft is the guiding force of his whole life. The wood-carver Schiedeck is a pious, humble fellow, but he harbors in his breast superhuman longings. He is warned by the priest that he is trying to be like God, yet he knows that he must follow this urge: "Alles, Baum, Erde, Wasser, Himmel, allen Erdenzauber und noch gar alles Weltgeheimnis in eine Figur (zu) bannen, das alle Gestalt Geist, und aller Geist, sogar der geheimste, Gestalt werde."[15]

The most significant phase of the artist's creative activity is his ability to submerge himself in his work, and by so doing to lose his individual identity and to pass into a state of complete anonymity. Mention has been made in other chapters of Stehr's conviction that

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[12] *Meister Cajetan,* p. 25.
[13] *Der Geigenmacher,* p. 226.
[14] P. 163.
[15] Pp. 27 f.

the lover in his happiest moment, the child in its play-world of dream, the hero in his heroic and the saint in his heavenly ecstasy pass into a realm beyond human consciousness, without space and without time into a state of anonymity, however brief.

The artist has the same experience "in dem göttlichen Schaffensrausch."[16] He feels a great unrest and then the sense of something forming within him; gradually the wall or veil, behind which the work seemed to hide, fades away; the artist finds the passage into the world towards which he was striving. "Das sind die Stunden der Empfängnis, denen kein Glück auf Erden zu vergleichen ist."[17] The Geigenmacher strove in his work to overcome his longing for his beloved Schönlein, and to experience a mystical union with her through his work. It is to be remembered here, that Schönlein, in her beauty, her anonymity, and her final elusiveness is in the last analysis a symbolic representation of the Divine. Cajetan built his violins in loving service to Marianne; he even called the violin which brought them together, the "Hochzeitsgeige."[18] But he identifies her with the Divine, and so it can be said that he experiences in his work a "marriage" with the Divine. This transcendence of all human and empirical limitations is most clearly presented in *Der Himmelschlüssel.* Pankratius Schiedeck is carried bodily out of this world by the magic of the little figure which he had brought to life. The wood-carver rises into the realm of the "Mütter," the region without time and space. His guide and leader explains to him where they are: "Wenn es dich gelüstet, das Brausen der Sonnen, das Rauschen der Planeten, das Säuseln der Monde und die engelsüssen Schwebelieder des Lichtes noch besser zu hören, dann darfst du nur dein Ohr an das Ende der Geisterebene legen, an der wir hier heraufgefahren sind. Denn wisse, wir stehen an den Grenzen des Weltalls und über uns breitet sich das Empireum aus, in dem der Herr des Alls zu Hause ist, den die Menschen auf der Erde Gott nennen."[19] This is the experience of the artist who is transported in his "göttlichem Schaffensrausch" to the realm of final realities, to the Divine.

Furthermore, this "göttlicher Schaffensrausch" is to be interpreted

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[16] *Faustgedanken, op. cit.,* p. 156.
[17] *Mein Leben,* p. 8.
[18] P. 110.
[19] P. 56.

as a creative activity which is similar to the original divine act of creation.

> Und jetzt das Letzte, was ich euch verkünde:
> Aus jenem Urschoss, dem den Namen Gott
> die Menschen geben, blüht auf die Gestalt
> der Dinge als ein Sinnbild oder Gleichnis
> des ew'gen Wesens, das sie schafft.
> Dann so
> ein zweitesmal blüht das Geschaff'ne aus
> des Menschen Geist und nennt sich T r a u m und D e n k e n,
> bleibt's im Verborgnen, W o r t, formt sichs im Munde,
> und W e r k, ersteht's zum eignen Dauerleben.
> Das Göttlichste am Menschen ist die Kraft,
> die Schöpfung sich ein zweitesmal zu schaffen.[20]

This potential, however, does not lie in the creative activity of the artist alone, but also in the created work, that is in art. Stehr was once so moved by Hauptmann's reading from *Michael Kramer* that he felt lifted out of the little room where they were and transplanted into the world created by his fellow writer: "Für mich gab es damals und noch lange, lange Zeit nachher nicht das, was man das kritische, ästhetische Verstehen nennt, vor allem beim ersten Genuss eines Werkes. Mochte es Malerei, Skulptur oder Musik oder Dichtung sein, ich bemächtigte mich seiner mit meiner ganzen, durchgeturnten Lebenskraft und schuf mir alles durch meine Phantasie sinnlich so bis in alle Einzelheiten deutlich, dass ich die Empfindungen meiner selbst vollkommen verlor."[21] This is Meister Cajetan's experience, too, not only when he himself played, but whenever he attended the concerts in Münster.[22]

It becomes clear now, that Stehr is not interested in the critical understanding or a purely aesthetic appreciation of art. His attitude is of a religious nature. The striving activity of the artist brings him into direct relation with the Divine. His work, in turn, lifts the listener too, above this empirical world into a state of anonymity. For example, all distinctions and identities disappear for the audience at the concert of the Geigenmacher's violin: "Zwischen Mensch und Tier fanden sie keinen Unterschied. Pflanzen sangen mit ihren Blumen wie Vögel, und diese waren wie gebundene Falter. Die Blätterkronen der Bäume saus-

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[20] *Der Monolog des Greises; Lebensbuch,* pp. 300 f.
[21] *Mein Leben,* p. 32.
[22] *Meister Cajetan,* pp. 21 f.

ten und brausten gleich Vögelschwarmen. Das Blut in den Adern ihres Körpers und das Wasser der Bäche strömte als Gleiches in gleichem Rhythmus. Im Schlag ihres Herzens hörten sie denselben Takt, nach dem Sonne, Mond und Sterne durchs Weltall tanzten. Ferne und Nähe war nicht mehr zu unterscheiden. Zorn und Neid und alle Leidenschaften hatten sie vergessen und selbst die Liebe, die aus dem Geschlecht steigt, war versunken. Die Klammern des Lebens hatten sich gelöst, sie standen jenseits alles Leidens, und alles Glückes. Worte, wie Eigentum und Besitz, Fremde und Heimat, Kind, Eltern und Geliebte, hatten ihren Sinn verloren."[23]

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[23] *Der Geigenmacher,* pp. 168 f.

8. Nature

Stehr's pride in his Silesian heritage and his interest in all things Silesian inspired him to write several special studies about the people, the landscape, and the culture of Silesia. In the most important of these he finds three elements to be characteristic of the typical Silesian, namely, "seine Veränderungssucht, seine zähe, fast kindliche Liebe zur Scholle und sein künstlerisches Talent."[1] The first two, as Milch points out,[2] appear later in Nadler as expressions of the conflict between "imaginatio" and "ratio" inherent in the Silesian character, and of the last, there can be but little doubt. The love of the soil is characteristic of the man Stehr and of his works. Happily, there is much information on hand about Stehr's own position to nature, and so it will be possible to deal here more with his life than could be done in other fields.

With the exception of but a few excursions, Stehr passed his whole life in his native Silesia. His home was always in small towns or villages, surrounded by mountain and forest. He spent his boyhood and early youth in Habelschwerdt, and then at the age of twenty-five moved into the lonely little village of Pohldorf. The years here were hard and unhappy, troubled by misfortune and grief. He had to go his way alone, misunderstood, betrayed by his friends, avoided by his colleagues, and attacked by the church. In these dark days he turned to nature. From *Blätter aus meinem Leben* we read, for example: "Freunde verliessen und verrieten mich, nirgends war ein Mensch, der mir Verständnis und Wohlwollen entgegenbrachte, und ich suchte auch keinen mehr. Der Wald, die Einsamkeit, das waren meine einzigen Freunde. Indessen gingen Sorge und Tod um das graue, verlorene Holzhaus am Bergeshang, klinkten an der Tür und trugen manchen Traum, manchen schönen Menschenglauben und ein Kind um das andere hinaus. Wie in einem Käfig mit unsichtbaren, aber engen Gitterstäben sass ich gefangen. Wenn ich mich nur bewegte, so stiess ich an und verwundete mich."[3]

[1] *Der Schlesier; Das Stundenglas,* p. 183.
[2] *Op. cit.,* p. 24.
[3] *Das Stundenglas,* p. 219.

Unlike so many of his contemporaries, Stehr grew up to the sound of wind and rain and the music of brook and bird:

> Mich haben Wald und Einsamkeit erzogen,
> der Berge Brausen und der Stille Strom.[4]

In a poem from the Pohldorf period, dated January 31, 1892, Stehr expressed his constant joy in nature; he found it a source of refreshment and happiness as a youth, and he knows it will bring him love and song even in death:

> Leichtfüssig in das Ungewisse streifen,
> im Walde träumen, an den Wassern sitzen,
> von Höhen die Gedanken lassen schweifen,
> dem Taulicht lächeln an den Schmelenspitzen
> und die Vergangenheiten zu belauschen,
> war meiner Jugend Liebe und Gesang.
> * * * * * *
> Und so soll's bleiben auch in grauen Tagen
> und wenn mich schleppt des Alters welker Flügel.
> Und so soll's bleiben, bis hinaus sie tragen
> mich unter den verstecktesten der Hügel!—
> Streckt nur ein Baum dann über mich die Aeste,
> und finden Vögel sich dort ein als Gäste,
> hab ich im Tod noch Liebe und Gesang.[5]

From this Pohldorf period (1889-1900) come Stehr's earliest writings, in so far as they have been published to date. It is most interesting to note that of the forty-six poems from this period, seventeen sing of nature. The significance of the nature-poems to Stehr was still undiminished when, in 1936, he released the collection, *Der Mittelgarten.* The arrangement of this volume is not chronological, but according to subject matter and, although the majority of the poems are philosophical corresponding to Stehr's natural inclination, it is the nature-poems which are placed first.

These early poems sing of a deep and simple love of nature. Their theme is the landscape and the seasons, in a word, the outward face of nature. In them Stehr expresses a love for the beauty of the mountains, for the mysterious music of the woods, the comforting softness

[4] *Mich haben Wald und Einsamkeit erzogen; Der Mittelgarten,* p. 121.
[5] *Liebe und Gesang; ibid.,* pp. 78 f.

of the pond and the night, and the thunderous fury of the storm. These nature-poems are more lyrical than Stehr's other poems; they give the impression of a more immediate emotional response. One of the most perfect of the set is the little poem, *Am Bache*. It is interesting to note the slow rhythm of a weary sadness in the first stanza, quickening with "schnelle Welle" and moving along brightly in the next two stanzas, only to return to the slow cadence again, though somewhat sustained now. The structure is reminiscent of the sonata form:

Füllen deine Seele wieder
tiefen Grames düstre Lieder,
sitz am Bache, an der Quelle,
schaue auf die schnelle Welle.

Sieh sie kommen, werden, wallen,
steigen, sausen und zerfallen!
Immer geht sie; aber immer
wird sie neu in Form und Schimmer.

Rastlos wiegt und wogt sie weiter,
jetzt ein Träumer, jetzt ein Streiter
und dann siegreich in der Ferne
saugt sie lächelnd Mond und Sterne.—

Füllen deine Seele wieder
tiefen Grames düstre Lieder,
sitz am Bache. Sinne, sinne,
stirb und steh, fall und beginne.[6]

This poem comes from a period when Stehr was beset by suspicion and persecution, buffeted by misfortune and tormented by terrible doubts and rebellious thoughts. Whenever the struggle became unbearable, however, and the confines of his house oppressive, he fled out into the forest, and there he always found peace and renewed inspiration:

Von unruhvoller, leerer Nacht getrieben,—
die traumverwirrt errungne Lebensklarheit,
zur Maske machte mein vertieftes Lieben
und schattenhaft die schwer erkämpfte Wahreit,—
erhob ich mich und ging aus meinem Haus
ins vielgeschwungne Höhental hinaus.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Erschüttert schritt ich aus, dem Wald entgegen,
damit der Schatten seiner dunklen Kronen
auslösche dieses Sinnens Teufelssegen
und Friedensgeister wieder in mir wohnen,
die schon so oft aus hohen, heiligen Zweigen
tief in mich sanken durch beredtes Schweigen.[7]

This same simple love of nature is just as evident throughout Stehr's prose work as it is in his earliest poems. It comes to expression in his predilection for the mountains and forests and villages of Silesia as the locale for his stories. Even where this is not the case, as for example in *Der Heiligenhof,* he avoids cities and buildings for field and hill and wood. He decries the pollution of civilization and regretfully observes the spread of its "slow stain." He sees trains, factories, smoke and noise make cities uninviting and ugly. People are drawn away from the simple life on the farms and their lives are changed for the worse: "Das behäbige, breitbeinige Dahertreten verschwand; hastig, mit gebeugtem Rücken, wie im Stoss, rannte das Leben hin."[8]

The great majority of his characters live in the closest relation to nature. They are simple folk; farmers, farm-hands, village artisans, country school teachers, and the like. Even such intellectually complex figures as Professor Konegen and Professor Weitfeld choose to live outside the city. Even Karl Exner's terrible greed for land is, in large measure, a perverted form of the "love of the soil." Andreas Sintlinger consistently expresses his thoughts in the terms and images of the trees and fields and animals which were so close and familiar to him.[9]

But there is another, deeper phase of Stehr's attitude towards nature. It is an insight which understands why the wonders of nature move him so profoundly and why he receives refreshment and new strength from nature. It is a realization of the Divine in nature. One day in autumn, Stehr relates, when he was taking a walk through the woods as was his custom, seeking solace and inspiration, he paused to listen to the brook:

Doch bin ich Höh'res, göttlich Element,
das Zeit nicht einengt und des Raumes Schranken.[10]

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[7] *Ein Herbstgang; ibid.,* pp. 34 f.
[8] *Drei Nächte,* pp. 127 f.
[9] Cf. Richter, F. K. *Der vergleichende Ausdruck in Stehrs Heiligenhof.* Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht, Oct., 1942.
[10] *Ein Herbstgang; op. cit.,* p. 38.

Beautiful and restful as it is, the brook is still more; for it is a part of the Divine. Through spring and fall, life and death, the form of nature changes; but the One, the All remains:

> In Allem klingt des Einen ewiges Lied,
> im kleinsten Wesen, wie im Weltgestalten.
> Gleich sind Vergehn und Werden, es vollzieht
> durch beides sich nur dauerndes Entfalten
> des ungeheuren Wesens, das Begreifen
> nie fängt in seinen kümmerlichen Schleifen.[11]

With this rediscovery of the Divine in nature Stehr begins to unravel the "mystery of the world." Nature is a manifestation of God. In a thousand ways the Divine makes itself evident to man; in the green of the grass, the ripple of the brook, and the wind in the trees. All this is understandable to man because, as previously shown, that which he calls God outside of him, is the same as the soul within him. Thus man hears his own voice in the song of the birds and looks upon his own features in the aspect of animals. Everywhere he sees God and himself.[12]

With the zeal of the prophet Stehr imparted his discovery to the world. He exhorted his fellow-man, whom he saw so sorely plagued by war and the tragedy of war, to pause and to listen to the voice of God in nature, and in his own soul. This is the message of *Der Heiligenhof* and the poem *An Spartakus* (1919):

> Halt ein! Lauscht einen Augenblick dem Kreisen
> der Sterne in den blauen Himmelsgründen!
> Und was dort oben tönt, denselben leisen,
> urew'gen Donner wird ein jeder finden
> in seiner Brust, und vor dem Gottesschweigen
> wird er erschüttert seinen Nacken neigen.[13]

The poet, however, who fails to sing of God in nature and in man desecrates his genius:

> Vergällt gesellt er sich den Uebersatten
> und missbraucht seine tönereiche Leier,
> dass er den Gott verlacht, der in ihm thront
> und wundersam in allen Dingen wohnt.[14]

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 39.
[12] *Weltgeheimnis; Lebensbuch*, pp. 214 f.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 282.
[14] *Detlev von Liliencron, ibid.*, p. 124.

Stehr believes that it is possible to find one's true self through nature. It was his own experience on countless occasions, for as already mentioned, when problems arose which threatened to check the flow of his creative genius, he would set out on long lonely walks into the woods, and there come into the clear about himself and his work. Such an experience is evident in the incident of the Hauptmann letter. At a time when Stehr was still struggling for recognition he received a letter from his renowned country-man, which was such a great joy to him that he felt house and school too small and fled into the forest tc read it: "Dort, die vertrauten Stimmen meiner geliebten Bäume über, den beglänzten dunkeln Teichspiegel vor mir und das lautlose, nur in der Seele hörbare Brausen der weissen Wolken in der unendlichen Höhenferne—dort ganz losgelöst von meiner bedrängten Erdenexistenz, *in der Feier meines höchsten reinsten Wesens versunken* [italics mine], genoss ich den Brief Gerhart Hauptmanns. . . ."[15]

The wise old man of *Der Monolog des Greises,* tells the townspeople, when they come to him to learn the secret of his happiness, that they must look to nature and let the Divine shine through their every thought and action "wie in den Dingen das Heiligformende sich selber bildet."[16] As was shown in the chapter on mankind, Wendelin Heinelt sinks symbolically through nature to God and to his own true self. Anton Gudnatz flees from his evil life into the wondrous beauty of the Grafschaft mountains, his homeland, which signified a return to his real homeland, to God and his true self.[17]

That man can find his true self through nature is evidence of the redemptive force of nature. This thought of redemption or purification through nature is an often recurring theme in Stehr's work. It represents a significant progression from the conception of the refreshing force of nature discussed earlier in this chapter. The voice of nature calls to Stehr and urges him to listen that he might be purified:

> Und du, Mensch, von dem Nachttraum irrgepeinigt,
> hör, dass dein Geist sich wieder tiefer reinigt.[18]

In the novel, *Nathanael Maechler,* nature plays the role of the conscience. Nathanael is trying to flee from a wrong he had committed; he has plunged wholeheartedly into his tanner's trade, turned with

[15] *Das Stundenglas,* p. 226.
[16] *Op. cit.,* p. 301.
[17] Cf. chapter on mankind.
[18] *Ein Herbstgang, op. cit.,* p. 37.

devotion and tenderness to his wife, Lotte, and exerted all his efforts to help the towns-people. He has risen to a place of importance and great respect, but the dark eyes of Paula Grossmann follow him inexorably. Even his wife is troubled by dreams of these eyes. Maechler turns at last to nature, hoping to find peace and rescue from the curse. He wanders out into the fields he knew so well, but everything seems completely strange to him now, almost unearthly. Suddenly his eyes are drawn to a peculiar dark cloud, which was clinging motionless to a precipitous ridge of the Riesengebirge. He sees, however, that it is no cloud at all, but a woman, kneeling and stretching out her arms threateningly towards him. He realizes soon afterward that there is no escape and so he confesses his guilt to his wife. Other instances of purification through nature are the experiences of Peter Brindeisener, Helene Sintlinger, and Mika, of *Der Inspektor.* It is very interesting to observe in this connection that the instrument of purification is water, a traditionally Christian formula. Peter Brindeisener, for example, finally prepares himself for salvation by his confession to his friend, and then plunges into the pond to find reunion with God in death. Brindeisener sees a bird falling into the pond; he rushes in, thinking to save it. At last he has reached the veil, which separated him from the realm of the Divine: "So rief der Buchhalter und seine Rufe klangen wie junger, jubelnder Gesang des Entsühnten, der glücklich ist, sein Leben zur Rettung eines andern einsetzen zu können."[19] Helene and Mika, both crushed by tragic experiences in love, find life no longer endurable. Only through death in the waters of a pond are they able to regain harmony with the Divine. The night before her death Helene sings "Schön ist die Jugend, sie kommt nicht mehr." "Als sei der Mondschein über der Welt tönend geworden, so sang sie das ganze Lied, klar, beseligt, ohne Schmerz und ohne Schatten."[20] Before her death Mika "singt jubelnd in den Himmel hinauf, . . . Mit dem Ausruf: 'Fangt keinen Vogel . . . er hat Flügel . . . oder stirbt,' "[21] she plunges into the bushes towards the pond.

This redemption through nature stands out all the more clearly when one remembers the other deaths which many of Stehr's characters choose. These other characters are not ready for salvation and so they destroy themselves by "unnatural" means: the Graveur, the Schindlemacher, the Inspektor, and Prahl-Meixner hang themselves; Wenzel and the forester (of *Die Legende vom steinernen Mann*) shoot

[19] *Peter Brindeisener,* p. 311.
[20] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 534.
[21] *Auf Leben und Tod,* p. 299.

themselves, and Marie Exner dies in the burning house to which she herself set fire.

As has been shown previously Stehr has a particular predilection for the forest. The little *Märchen, Die Geschichte vom Rauschen,* offers an explanation for this preference. The friendly thoughts of the Eternal One, according to the story, had glided down upon the earth and taken root; from them sprang the plants who nodded silently towards heaven. But all was still, for nothing on earth had a voice. So the Lord created the trees that they might make music in the wind. He flew over the earth and: "Die Welten zitterten bei seinem Vorüberflug wie Küchlein unter dem Gefieder des Adlers. Als die Fittiche des Ewigen über der Erde hinstrichen, rüttelte er sie, dass eine Deckfeder sich daraus loslöste. Sie sank hernieder und bohrte sich drunten mit ihrer Spitze in den Boden, der den Abhang eines Berges bedeckte. Wurzeln liefen alsbald aus von ihr, und das Land tränkte sie mit seinen Säften, die darin auf und nieder stiegen und ihre Form wandelten nach den Gesetzen der Erde. Ihr schimmernder Schaft wurde ein Stamm, hart wie Stein und rissig anzusehen gleich dem Felsen. Ihre Fahne aber verwandelte sich in ein grünes Gefieder. Das hob und senkt sich an tausend Aesten und Zweigen. Ehe sich dreimal der Morgen erneut hatte, war das Rauschen heimisch geworden auf der Erde, die dahinein ihre Seele ergoss, die sonst stumm in den Tiefen gelegen hatte, ihr Glück und ihren Kummer, ihr Lachen und ihre schwere Weisheit, und allemal, wenn das Rauschen seine grünen Schwingen rührte, klang es, als strichen die Fittiche des Unnennbaren vorüber."[22]

Stehr's artists are particularly aware of the divine origin of the wood. How Pankratius Schiedeck felt the mysterious tremors of life in the old stump on which he was sitting has already been mentioned in the chapter on art. He knew then that this was the material out of which he could create his finest piece of work, and the man he fashioned therefrom led him up into the realm of the Divine. Stehr's other two artists both fashion their instruments from wood, too. The Geigenmacher is filled with the desire to create a most wonderful violin; for inspiration he turns to aristocratic society, to love, religion, and science, but he is bitterly disappointed in all. Finally he goes out into the forest, and here he builds a violin so wonderful that its tones dissolve all earthly limitations and even human identity for the listeners. It is the magic of the Divine which flows out through the violin. Such an in-

[22] *Mythen und Mären,* pp. 96 f.

strument, he knows, is not for mortals, and so he returns it to God, whence it came. He hangs it upon the limb of a great tree deep in the forest, where God himself may play upon it again. Meister Cajetan's relation to nature is very similar. When he finished a new violin, he would leave his shop and the town behind him and set out for the open fields and the rolling heath. Here he would try it out, finding his accompaniment in the music of nature. Cajetan was a lonely, unhappy man; he did not even know where he came from, and he could not achieve his goal no matter how he tried. But the view of hill and heath, and pond and wood always strengthened him and renewed his hope. These moments spent in the contemplation and enjoyment of nature brought him the feeling that he was returning to his real home[23]—and once again we should interpret this as man's true self within him and the Divine without. In the more real atmosphere of *Der Heiligenhof,* we see Andreas Sintlinger constantly fleeing from his speculations and broodings out into the fields and the woods. Upon one occasion he was observed standing before some trees, apparently deeply moved and gazing reverently as one does before an altar. He too, is conscious of the Divine in nature, and this knowledge comes to him from the trees.

Stehr's characters all have to grope to find the presence of the Divine in nature, that is, all except his children. They have been shown to remain in the spell of the Divine from where they sprang, and it is this which makes their oneness with nature possible. Stehr's children delight in nature; they seem to be on such intimate terms with all of nature. When Amadeus Mandel sings, for instance, the sounds of nature itself are in his song; when he plays, the music which sleeps in nature is set free; "Das Traumtürlein in des Amadeus Seele öffnete sich. Das klingende Seil, das ihn an jenem Abend mit allen Weiten verbunden hatte, ging strahlend daraus hervor, und die tönende Verklärung, die in den Wesen der Erde schlummert, wurde in dem Herzen des kleinen, blassen Schneiderjungen erschlossen."[24] In like manner the song of little Damian Maechler seems to blend almost indistinguishably with the song of spring.[25] The marvelous interplay of child and nature and its disruption in the presence of an older person is beautifully portrayed in *Der Heiligenhof.* On one occasion Sintlinger came upon his daughter playing with a butterfly. Strange and wonderful it was how the butterfly hovered about her head and in seeming ecstasy alighted upon her

[23] P. 15.
[24] *Geschichten aus dem Mandelhause,* p. 50.
[25] *Die Nachkommen,* p. 256.

hand: "Das Lenlein aber redete zu ihm, was der Sintlinger, der Entfernung halber, nicht verstehen konnte. Doch merkte er an dem Klang der Stimme, dass sie bald unzufrieden war wie eine ernste Mutter, bald verliebt flüsterte, bald lockte, und das unscheinbare Sylphlein folgte ihr in allem; floh, bat mit hartnäckiger Zudringlichkeit, schmiegte sich bebend über die Hand hin und sog sich dann mit den Füssen förmlich auf der Haut fest. Als der Heiligenbauer näher trat, wurde der Schmetterling zuerst aus seiner Trunkenheit verscheucht und flog fallend, taumelig, unsicher davon, wieder nur ein Schmetterling."[26] Just as the child's simplicity and purity bring it closer to nature, so does every transgression on the part of an older person estrange him further from nature. For example, the chastity of nature trembles at the sight of the desecration of love,[27] with a cry of anguish a bird flees from the side of wanton lovers;[28] and the moon seems to fall from heaven when two lovers yield to blind passion.[29]

Stehr's position to nature is not pantheistic, and he states so in unequivocal terms: "Dieser Weg zur Erreichung der transzendent begründeten Persönlichkeit, deren höchste und reinste Steigerung in die Ueberpersönlichkeit mündet, ist nicht der Weg des Pantheismus, sondern der des Theismus."[30] That it cannot be pantheistic is also clear from the statement of Sintlinger: "Sie (the soul, the Divine) ist reicher von Grund aus als die Erde und bedarf der Welt nicht. Aber die Welt ohne Seele wäre wie ein Haufen Kehricht."[31] Stehr's God exists before the world and stands above it. In the poem *Ein Herbstgang,* quoted above, the voice of the Divine speaks to Stehr through nature:

> Doch bin ich Höh'res, göttlich Element,
> das Zeit nicht einengt und des Raumes Schranken.

and continuing:

> Was hier vor dir durch Moos und Steine rennt,
> sah Welten, die entstanden und versanken.
> Eh diese Erde wurde, war ich da
> und nichts geschieht, was nicht durch mich geschah.[32]

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[26] P. 232.
[27] *Meicke der Teufel, op. cit.,* pp. 147 f.
[28] *Das entlaufene Herz, op. cit.,* p. 203.
[29] *Peter Brindeisener,* p. 192.
[30] *Faustgedanken, op. cit.,* p. 159.
[31] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 286.
[32] *Op. cit.,* p. 38.

Further discussion of this problem, and Stehr's term "theistic," will be found in the following chapter.

In conclusion, there comes to mind a remark of Stehr's about the relation of man and nature. The landscape, he once said, gives a people its peculiar character; and then, continuing, he made this observation about his own beloved Grafschaft: "Ueberall, wohin der Blick sich auch wenden mag, trifft er auf Bergwände, die ihm den Flug ins Weite, aber nicht in die Höhe nehmen."[33] So it is with Stehr himself; everywhere he looked at nature, and everywhere it led him upwards, to God.

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[33] *Die Grafschaft und die Grafschafter, op. cit.,* p. 192.

9. God

In his study on the Silesian spirit and genius Stehr observes of the latter: "dass sein Ernst tiefdringend, seine Heiterkeit gedankenvoll, seine Formkraft vielfältig, sein Wagen mutig und zäh, sein Träumen versonnen, fromm, ja, himmlisch angeglüht sei."[1] With simple pride he refers to his famous fellow country-men, Opitz, Gryphius, Günther, von Logau, Eichendorff, Freytag, and the brothers Hauptmann. But the peak of Silesian genius he sees in the great God-seekers, Angelus Silesius and Jakob Böhme: "Sie kommen aus Tiefen, die germanischer Geist nur einmal noch, im 12. Jahrhundert, durch Meister Ekkehard abgelotet hat."[2]

It is in their tradition that Stehr himself moves. God is his "Urerlebnis."[3] His characters, poetic projections of himself and his own struggle, all seek God: "Ihr Verhältnis zu Gott durchläuft die ganze Skala vom primitiven Aberglauben bis zur letzten Instanz der 'unio mystica' und der von ihr bedingten Lebenshaltung."[4]

Let us now consider the various relationships of Stehr's characters to God, and then, having gained thereby some conception of Stehr's God, proceed to the problem of God's relationship to man in so far as it concerns our subject.

A brief survey of Stehr's characters is sufficient to illustrate Freitag's observation on the complete scale of relationships to God which they experience. Wenzel, for instance, is bitterly atheistic, Marie Exner is swayed by primitive superstition, Frau Faber, old Klim and old Wennrich believe in the orthodox Christian faith, Vanlyssender is quietistic, the Geigenmacher not without pagan tendencies, Prahl-Meixner is carried away by a fanatical emotionalism, and Professor Weitfeld by a fanatical intellectualism. Nathanael Maechler, Faber, and Sintlinger all have an intensely personal, Faustian attitude. It is most interesting to

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[1] *Der Schlesier, op. cit.*, p. 189.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 187.
[3] "Der kleine Hermann erlebte ihn (Gott) wie er Vater und Mutter wirklich erlebte." Kaergel, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
[4] Freitag, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Cf. also Schwarz, R., *op. cit.*, p. 54, "Alle Werke sind Merksteine seiner Gottesstrasse."

note, however, that of all the many different relationships there is only one which approaches that of Christian love. This is Bruder Theophil of the short-story, *Meister Cajetan.* His is the simple quiet life of service and devotion to his fellow-man. Stehr gives him, quite significantly, the name Theo-phil, God-lover. He was supposed to have been a monk, and so it would be safe to assume that he represents the Christian attitude, i.e., love of God through His Son. Theophil would seem, then, to be one example in Stehr's work of that relationship of man to God which can be called truly Christian. Two facts, however, modify the significance of this example; first, Bruder Theophil remains a subordinate figure and secondly, Stehr weakens his position further by indicating that he was probably one of the Capuchin monks who had had to leave the Church.[5]

Explanation of the almost total absence of the typical Christian relationship is to be found in Stehr's position to the question of the divinity of Christ. Stehr has expressed his views very clearly in the essay *Vom Christentum,*[6] in his conversation with Kaergel,[7] and in his foreword to Erich Mühle's book,[8] to mention but a few instances.[9] The words which the gentle, pious Vanlyssender addresses to the new priest represent Stehr's own conviction: "Deswegen nämlich, Hochwürden, sind wir nicht wie ihr, . . . weil wir Querhovener vom ersten bis zum letzten Christum nicht für einen Gott, sondern für einen göttlichen Menschen halten, für den Menschensohn, als den er sich bei Markus immer bezeichnet."[10] This probably also accounts for the fact that, with the exception of Nathanael Maechler, none of Stehr's principal God-seekers attends Mass, which is a service of love to God through His Son.

The mention of Maechler in this respect brings up the interesting problem of his apparent return to the church. If we accept this as evidence of a change of attitude on Stehr's part, i.e., from his belief in the sole responsibility of the individual in regard to his final relation to God, as expressed for example in *Der Heiligenhof* and *Der Monolog des Greises,* then we should expect to find other similar examples following this. But such is not the case, for his son Jochen remains aloof from the church, and Pankratius Schiedeck, Stehr's last

[5] P. 36.
[6] *Das Stundenglas,* pp. 125 ff.
[7] Ueber Christus, *op. cit.,* pp. 165 ff.
[8] *Hermann Stehr.* Ein deutscher Gottsucher der Gegenwart, 1937.
[9] Cf. also Freitag, *op. cit.,* pp. 214 ff.
[10] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 363.

God-seeker, who is rebuked by the priest, finds his own way to the Divine. The explanation probably lies in the character of Maechler himself. He, like all of Stehr's characters, strove to establish the relation with the Divine by his own efforts, but recognizing his guilt for his wife's death and consequently his inability to achieve inner peace he turned to the church. It may be that, in accord with the amelioration of his attitude towards the church,[11] Stehr shows one of his characters following the orthodox Christian way to the "unverwölkbaren Innenhimmel." "Der Wege dahin sind so viele, als es Individuen, Kirchen, Staatsverfassungen, Stämme und Völker gibt."[12] And yet one cannot fail to take with him the impression, gained from Maechler's experience, that this way is essayed only after the individual has failed to discover his own true self.

There is no evidence of any of Stehr's characters experiencing a relation to God which would be comparable to the Christian's feeling for the Father. His characters grope for something immeasurably vast, something incomprehensible, impersonal, something above and beyond the world, but at the same time immanent in it. One need but recall Pankratius Schiedeck who dared to look, though but for a fleeting moment, upon "diesem furchtbar blendenden Lichtabgrund" which mortals call God. He was blinded and would have died of it had not his friend rescued him: "Nein, nein, mein Lieber," his mysterious friend says in gentle rebuke,[13] "das Allerletzte ist den Menschen versagt, solange sie im Leibe wandern. Dahin dürfen sie nur mit ihrer höchsten Sehnsucht greifen."

In a letter to the author Stehr once expressed his position in regard to this question very clearly: "Eine Gottesliebe kann es nicht geben, weil kein Mensch sich eine Vorstellung von dem Unendlichen machen kann. Auch der Umweg über die zahllosen Werke seiner Schöpfung ermöglicht nur ein Ahnen seiner Wesenheit. Wir wissen nur, in ihm ruhen, leben und sind wir."[14] This last sentence, with its suggestion of "resting in him," is strongly reminiscent of eastern religious thought,

[11] Cf. *Eine Begegnung* (1928); *Das Stundenglas,* pp. 244 f.
[12] *Ibid.,* p. 245.
[13] *Der Himmelschlüssel,* p. 38. One cannot escape the feeling that Stehr was aware of the meaning and depth of the symbolism in the name, Pankratius, all-strength or force, which name admirably expresses Schiedeck's Faustian striving. Furthermore, according to J. P. Makaffey, *Old Greek Life,* 1884, p. 56: "The severest contest of the Greeks was the Pancration, where the combatants, who were naked and unarmed, were allowed to use any violence they liked to overcome their adversary."
[14] April 10, 1940.

particularly that of primitive Buddhism. It has been pointed out that early Buddhism never used the language of love in addressing the Buddha, much less the other deities. The votaries of Buddha speak of honoring him, trusting him, resting in him, but not of loving him.[15] In general, there seems to be a certain reserve on the part of the eastern races in their relationship to the deity. James Moffatt brings out the point that the Chinese, for example, "are not an emotional race, and apparently traditional associations make it hard for some of them to enter into the Western Church's employment of love-language towards God."[16] He goes further, quoting from Campbell N. Moody's *The Heathen Heart;* "the idea of loving God seems scarcely to have occurred to him (the average convert in Formosa); yet it ought to be understood that the Chinese use of the term 'love' differs from ours in two respects. With the Chinese 'love' is love in action; and thus it is an unseemly boast to speak of loving one another, whereas one may rightly say, 'He greatly loved me,' meaning, He treated me with kindness and perhaps gave me presents. Moreover, 'love,' with the Chinese, is condescending love. Parents 'love' their children; children do not presume to 'love' their parents, they reverence them. In general, the great may 'love' the small; the small cannot 'love' the great. Accordingly, when Chinese first hear us speak of loving God, the expression is apt to seem irreverent. The thought of loving God does not arise spontaneously, though the feeling may be present."

Stehr's position is closely parallel to this attitude. There is a total absence in his work of the love-language as applied to God, and even of the love-feeling as it is understood by the Western Church. Stehr's God-seekers are vitally concerned with seeking out a satisfying, lasting relation to God; they are driven on by a longing that is essentially active, often violent. However different the experiences and the fate of Faber, Sintlinger, Nathanael Maechler, Vanlyssender, Marie Exner, Prahl-Meixner, and Professor Weitfeld may be, common to all is the groping in "höchster Sehnsucht," mentioned by Schiedeck's mysterious friend as the only approach to God.

Of all these, however, it is Sintlinger's struggle which interests Stehr most and which consequently receives the most thorough and

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[15] "Honour, worship, or homage, faith or confidence, and the term pasama, which may be rendered 'resting in,' 'satisfied with'—such are the expressions for the emotions felt, but not 'love'." Davids, Rhys; *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics,* VIII, pp. 160 f.

[16] *Love in the New Testament.* London, 1929.

complete treatment. Sintlinger's struggle and the final realization that comes to him from it bring to the fore several points which are all important for the understanding of Stehr's position to the problem at hand. First, there is the dynamic quality of Sintlinger's striving. The man seems almost obsessed by a restless searching. The lonely walks and copious notations reflect his inner agitation. It is a chance discovery of these notes that brings Johanna a frightening realization of the extent of her husband's turmoil: "Alle Schnitzel waren von des Sintlingers Hand dicht beschrieben, sie vermochte wenig zu entziffern, und das Gelesene konnte sie ganz und gar nicht verstehen. Der Name Gott kam oft vor, an anderen Stellen las sie von ewiger Allmacht und Güte, vom Sinn der Welt, von Lebensnarrheit, vom inneren Wust des Menschengeistes und des Daseins, vom Strassenbau; auch vom Brindeisenerhofe, von Helene, Peter, von ihr, den Querhovenern, dem Pfarrer und dem alten Klim, ihrem Vater, war geschrieben. Aus allem ersah sie aber doch zuletzt, dass ihr Andreas mit Gott aufs neue haderte und kämpfte. . . ."[17]

Sintlinger is conscious of the overwhelming vastness of God and he realizes the insignificance of man. This is the relationship of the very "small" to the very "great." Like the Chinese described by Moody, Sintlinger does not think of "loving" God.

In the case of Sintlinger Stehr was more interested in the process of development, but he nevertheless completed his treatment with a clear indication of the final stage achieved. At the end of his way Sintlinger attains inner peace and a quiet happiness, expressed symbolically in the song of the bell he tolls for Helene, which rings "immer heiter wie die Stimme eines Kindes."[18] From an examination of this final stage of Sintlinger's development four conclusions are to be drawn.

First of all, we see from Sintlinger's fate that the winning of this lasting harmony is the responsibility of the individual and must be established by his own efforts. The death of Helene brings the total collapse of her father's world, for he had been able to build it only through her. Faber understands this and admonishes his faltering friend: "Auch damals (while Helene lived) lebtest du eigentlich nur ihr Leben, sannst mit ihrem Geiste und fühltest mit ihrem Herzen." And further: "Selbst die reinste Liebe ist ein Irrweg, wenn sie dich nicht ganz auf den Pfaden deines Geistes führt, und zu allerletzt im

[17] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 495.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 555.

tiefsten darf kein Mensch jemand anders angehören als nur Gott."[19] He advises Sintlinger that he must regain the heights he had found and this time by his own strength.

This same conviction of the individual's personal responsibility determines the attitude to the church. Sintlinger rejects the church as intermediary between man and God; Lenlein flees from the church on her first visit and ever after feels an aversion to it. Around the Sintlingers there grew an ever increasing group of Querhovener Anabaptists, who withdrew from the church in order to work out their own salvation. They came to be disdainful of those "die ihre Seelen in dem totem Atem der Priester verwesen liessen, indem sie glaubten, man könne auf einer papiernen Brücke und mit den Füssen anderer hinüber zu Gott gelangen."[20] In contrast, they held to the belief expressed by the Vanlyssender: "Der Glaube ist demnach weder eine Angelegenheit der Kirche noch auch des Staates. Die Religion geht allein von der reinen Seele des einzelnen Menschen zu Gott und wieder von Gott zurück."[21]

The second point is already indicated in Faber's warning upon the occasion of his first meeting with Sintlinger. It concerns the futility of the intellectual approach to God: "Das Wissen um das Denken," says Faber, "hat mehr Seelen zerstört, als Schwerter seit jeher Menschen erschlugen. Wer weiss, ohne es zu denken, und fühlt, ohne es zu fühlen, allein jener denkt und fühlt das ewig Denkens-und Fühlenswürdige. Das Wissen des Denkens gleicht dem Blick, der eine Kugel von aussen sieht. Das Denken ohne Bewusstsein erlebt die Bewegungen des Weltalls und das Gefühl, das sich nicht kennt, die Empfindungen Gottes."[22] Sintlinger's later collapse can be attributed, in part, to the fact that he endeavored to build and justify his new world by rationalization. He does not "know," but must continue to think deliberately and consciously. He learns in the end, however, that his excessive intellectual speculations have prevented him from "experiencing" the Divine.[23] It is interesting to observe that Peter Brindeisener, in many respects the counter-part of Sintlinger, comes to the same conclusion.

Interesting here, too, is Stehr's choice of the word *erlebt*. It, like

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 549.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 297.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 340.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 157.
[23] Richard Schwarz, *op. cit.*, p. 73, speaking of Stehr's "Anonymität" (a phase of the man-God relation) calls it "ein Erfühlen der Erkenntnis," but somehow comes to the misleading conclusion that "Liebe und Erkenntnis eins sind." Neither term is appropriate here.

"resting in" and "living in" God, is preferred to loving or knowing. In this respect Faber's symbol of the bird and the tree is also worth noting. He speaks of a bird perched on the outermost twig of a tree experiencing only the movements of the twig, but upon moving further in to a branch he can feel the sway of many twigs and yet be moved but little himself. Should he move, however, still further inward, close on the very trunk of the tree, he could feel the movements of the whole tree and yet himself be unshaken: "Noch mehr wie diesem Vogel geschieht einem Menschen, der bis in die Tiefe seiner Seele sinkt. Denn dort *erlebt* (italics mine) er alles Leben, das ganze Weltall, den ganzen Gott, mit all seinen Geheimnissen, weil dieser unser Grund auch der Grund Gottes ist."[24]

There is still another point to be drawn from Sintlinger's fate and it too, is revealed by Faber. He warns Sintlinger, "dass es ihn am Ende in einer furchtbaren Mühle wirbeln werde, weil er überall, wohin ihn das Sinnen führe, sich immer selbst mitnehme, sogar zu seinem Gott hinein."[26] Gradually Sintlinger sees how self-centered his life has been and realizes the consequences of his egotism. He thinks of his old father-in-law, whose death he had caused, of Father Ardelt, whom he had driven into the grave, of Prahl-Meixner, who had hanged himself; he realizes that he alone had upset the peace of the whole region, set people at variance, estranged his wife, and caused the ancestral feud to flare anew. And yet he had endeavored to live up to Lenlein: "Ja, ja, reiner und reiner, für sich selbst natürlich."[26] Finally, after the tragic death of his daughter, he is able, with the guidance of Faber, to overcome himself and free himself "von der Eitelkeit seines Geistes und der Selbstverliebtheit des Herzens." He gives away his farm and lands, thus conquering the family hatred for the Brindeiseners, and lives in the radiance of his real self, in kindness and love to all men. "Nun. Ja, ja. Es ist wohl so. Wenn man immerfort bloss an sein eigenes Leben denkt, verliert man's, und wenn man's gibt, kriegt man's. Und ein jeder von uns ist immer nur der Laut der Schritte eines Grösseren, der nach uns kommt."[27]

The individual becomes no longer a personality but an anonymity. This term, occurring so often in Stehr's writings, conversations, and speeches, does not appear here in connection with Sintlinger's final transforma-

[24] *Der Heiligenhof*, pp. 552 f.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 377.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 554.

tion, but there can be no doubt as to the fitness of its application. Stehr grants us only an indication of Sintlinger's experience in this respect, for he knows that the poet cannot describe the "ineffabile."[28] Perhaps the final lines of the Heiligenhof, where Stehr speaks of Sintlinger's desire to toll the family bell that he might awaken the voice of his child, perhaps these lines have a deeper meaning than is apparent at first reading. If so, it can be gleaned from some words Stehr once spoke to Kaergel: "Freilich ist diese Persönlichkeit nur ein Weg, nicht das Ziel. Insofern scheine ich mich von Goethes Wort zu scheiden, der davon spricht, dass höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder nur die Persönlichkeit sei. Nein, wir brauchen sie nur als Hinstreben zu dieser göttlichen Anonymität. Freilich wird auch dieses Hinstreben eine unbewusste Tatsache in uns bleiben. Es gibt nur einen Menschen, der diese göttliche Tatsache immer in sich trägt: das Kind. . . . Wohl dem Menschen, dem aus der Kindheit dieses Läuten der Himmelsglocken noch klingt, dass er noch versinken kann im All, den Weg findet zum eigentlichen Selbst."[29] This leads up to the last point.

It has just been stated that Sintlinger, in the end, overcomes his egotism and finds his real self. Once he has entered into this state of peace and happiness there follows a spontaneous overflow into an active charity to all. This relationship of kindness and love between men has already been under discussion in the chapter on mankind, but there are several observations which must now be made.

One fact is certain, namely that this charity, or love in action towards one's fellow-man, has its source and strength in the divine power which the individual has discovered in him and allowed to flow through him. Without it this love is futile. One need but recall how Sintlinger was forced to give up his early altruistic plans, or how Nathanael Maechler wrestled with the problem of *Gnade* and *Recht*. The meaning of Faber's statement to Sintlinger now becomes clear: "Die unbegrenzte Liebe der Menschen zueinander ist die einzige Offenbarung des Gottes in uns und des Weltgottes, die ein und dasselbe sind."[30] It is not enough for Stehr's characters to experience the divine power themselves; there must be an outlet, an expression for this

[28] "Er verzichtet darauf, im Sinne Carl Hauptmanns das Letzte sichtbar zu machen, was ja doch ein zuletzt unlösbares Beginnen bleiben muss, er geht den Weg zum Optimalen, indem er nur Wege zeigt und in wenigen seltenen Momenten das Glück der Erlöstheit. Niemals aber schreitet er vor zu einer Darstellung des Erlebnisses selbst." Milch, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

[29] *Op. cit.*, p. 158.

[30] *Der Heiligenhof*, p. 372.

experience. It overflows, spontaneously and irrepressibly, into active charity.

In Sintlinger this phenomenon is only indicated, but in Faber it finds its most complete expression. Faber has attained a perfect harmony with God, for he is "resting in" him, "living in" him and "being."[31] There is a wonderful calm and strength in this man Faber; he is described as being like a king, and again "wie ein grosser gütiger Menschenvater."[32] Unmindful of family, friend, and self he feels impelled to set out into the world and direct his life to guiding and serving others. Like Sintlinger he found his true self (soul and God) and then gave this experience expression in active love towards his fellow-man. This is also true in the case of Wendelin Heinelt and Anton Gudnatz.

Before considering the relationship of God to man, it is necessary to have in mind an understanding of Stehr's concept of God. It has been shown in the previous chapter that Stehr's concept is not pantheistic. There are, indeed, many elements of pantheism to be found in his concept, as for instance the belief in the immanence of the Divine in nature and also in the manifestation of the Divine through nature (the natura-naturans and natura-naturata of Spinoza[33]) but these do not exhaust Stehr's concept. According to Stehr his concept is theistic, but there are certain fundamentals of his *Weltanschauung* which are absolutely incompatible with theism. Stehr, for example, does not experience a personal God, and consequently he does not believe in the freedom of the will on the part of God, both of which are essential concepts to the theist.[34] There are occasional references in Stehr's works to the Divine as the "Herrgott" or "Allvater," but these serve chiefly as fitting imagery for the stories in which they occur and not as a formal expression of *Weltanschauung*.[35] The great

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[31] Cf. letter to author quoted above.

[32] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 546.

[33] Cf. Freitag, *op. cit.,* pp. 183-216 and 309-316; also Schwarz, R., *op. cit.,* pp. 62 ff. for the discussion of Stehr's concept of God in general.

[34] Cf. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge,* ed. Samuel M. Jackson, Vol. XI, London, 1911; also *The Catholic Encyclopedia,* ed. Chas. G. Herbermann and others, Vol. XIV, New York, 1912; and *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.* Handerwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft, hrsg. v. Hermann Gunkel und Leopold Zscharnack, Vol. V, Tübingen, 1931.

[35] The three stories, *Die Geschichte vom Rauschen, Das letzte Kind,* and *Das Märchen vom deutschen Herzen,* all significantly enough included in the volume *Mythen und Märthen,* are the only works of Stehr where the Divine is even seemingly treated as a personal, loving God. In the case of *Das letzte Kind,* this may be ex-

majority of Stehr's works, however, do not attempt to give form to the Divine; "In ernster Bescheidung verzichtet der Dichter dann auf die Gestaltung des Ungestaltbaren . . . Stehr schweigt von dem, was unaussagbar ist, er spricht von Wegen und von Abwegen, er gestaltet Schicksale, die ihren Sinn nur dann haben, wenn das Unausgesprochene mitgedacht ist. Aber die Darstellung verschweigt das, was sich ihr grundsätzlich entzieht."[36]

If it is not possible to designate Stehr's concept of God as pantheistic, or as theistic, then perhaps the most nearly appropriate formulation will be panentheistic.[37] This will allow of the immanence of the Divine in nature and also its "Ueber-der-Welt-sein," both being elements of the theistic concept. But beyond this it is to be construed as designating the impersonal nature of the Divine.

The loving Grace of God towards man is the essential characteristic of the orthodox Christian concept of God, but Stehr's God manifests no such love towards man. Stehr says in fact:

> Mit Teufel, Hölle und mit Gott,
> wie sie die Christenpfaffen
> den armen Menschen malen, hab
> ich gar nichts mehr zu schaffen.[38]

Even in *Die Legende vom steinernen Mann,* where there is evidence of divine sympathy for lovers, the Divine remains, in the final analysis, rigid, fixed, apart, a "versteinerter Gott."[39] Sintlinger eliminates the possibility of God's love in words which profoundly shock his orthodox father-in-law: "Nun, und meinst du etwa, es hätte jemand in oder ausser der Welt die Gewalt, den losgelassenen Stein nicht fallen und die Wolken nicht fliegen zu lassen, wenn der Wind geht?—Ein Einziger?" . . . "Jawohl . . . auch Gott nicht. Nicht ein Stäubchen kann er daran ändern! Nichts! Haha.—Oder wenn er's täte, wäre er wie

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plained as being an intrinsic part of the belief of the simple woman about whom the story revolves. As for the other two tales, they represent the poet's treatment of material which can only be presented symbolically, and that most satisfactorily in a manner universally understood, i.e. theistic terminology. Cf. also Freitag, op. *cit.,* p. 194.

[36] Milch, W., *op. cit.,* p. 56.

[37] "eine bestimmte philosophische Ausgestaltung gerade des theistischen Gottesgedankens." Steinmann, Theoph., *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart.* Tübingen, 1930, Vol. IV, p. 881.

[38] *Altersfreude; Der Mittelgarten,* p. 140.

[39] Freitag, *op. cit.,* p. 288.

ein Mensch, der sich selber das Leben nimmt. . . ."[40] This concept Sintlinger retains despite the great transformation he undergoes in other respects, and it is interesting to note that Faber, although pointing out the error in Sintlinger's way to his wisdom, acknowledges the truth of Sintlinger's views.[41]

Stehr's belief in the impersonal nature of the Divine and his contention of the consequent absence of a loving interest towards man on the part of the Divine closely parallels the thought of Laotse and Buddha, whose influence on him he acknowledges.[42] However, man is not left without consolation or succor in Stehr's world, for he possesses a divine soul and through it he is able to find salvation. "Und er weiss immer klarer, immer deutlicher und zwingender, dass keine Gnade imstande ist, die Wandelformen seiner irdischen Art diesem seinem ewigen Wesen anzugleichen, sondern nur sein reiner guter Wille."[43]

In conclusion, it can be said that Stehr does not belong to that group of mystics whose "love" of God tends to become a refined passion for the absolute or to dissolve the tie of love between man and man, but that he achieves a fusion of eastern mysticism and Christianity, in respect to his position to God on the one hand, and to charity on the other.

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[40] *Der Heiligenhof,* p. 83.
[41] *Ibid.,* pp. 549 ff.
[42] "Meister Ekkehart, Laotse, Buddha, Kant und Spinoza waren die Männer, durch deren Schule ich gegangen bin. Ich danke ihnen Höchstes und Tiefstes, aber keinem von ihnen bin ich ganz verfallen." *Mein Leben,* p. 34.
[43] *Das neue Evangelium; Das Stundenglas,* p. 165.

CHAPTER III

Summary

Stehr's work is his mission and through it he proclaims his new gospel. He summons man to a spiritual regeneration and exhorts him to look inward and experience the divine power and peace that is in his own true self. All that hinders man in his struggle to this end, he must avoid; all that aids him he must seek. Foremost among the experiences which shape his life is love, and his failure or success in life is determined, in large measure, by the nature of the love which he experiences.

Sensual love hinders man and stifles his inner life; in many cases it leads to his physical ruination, and in all instances it destroys him spiritually. The greed for material possessions twists and stains him and shackles him to the empirical world. A purely intellectual love estranges him and disrupts his family. On the other hand, a love which encompasses both physical and intellectual or spiritual elements, solidifies the family and contributes to the spiritual welfare of the individual members. This same love can lift man above and beyond his empirical self and lead him to his true self, transcending personality and culminating in an anonymity in the Divine. Friendship, which is interpreted as an attraction by fate, acts as a beacon for man in his search. The artist, unlike the ordinary man, must renounce all desire, for his inspiration springs from spiritual love. His devotion to his art enables him to experience moments of anonymity, which bring him into a union with the Divine. Furthermore, the work of art, and in particular the music which it produces, has the power of transporting the listener, too, in like manner. The simple love of nature refreshes and strengthens man; the deeper experience of nature reveals the Divine. The "new" man must not withdraw from the world but achieve victory over it in active, joyous love towards his fellow-man. He finds the immediate sphere of the practical application of this love in the nation, but he stands above chauvinistic motives. In the supreme devotion to his native land man experiences the moments of anonymity which the lover and the artist, and also the child and the saint experience. The "new" man cannot "love" the God whom he seeks nor expect love from him, he knows, however, that his love for his fellow-man is the only manifestation of the Divine which is within him and of the Divine which is in the world about him.

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